

1358.9.7.

S E R M O N S
O N
S E V E R A L S U B J E C T S
A N D
O C C A S I O N S

I N T W O V O L U M E S.

By *BENJAMIN CLEMENT, A. B.*

Late Prebendary of the Collegiate Church, and Minister of St. John's in *Wolverhampton, Staffordshire*;
and Vicar of *Braunton* in the County of *Devon*.

Published from the *AUTHOR's* Manuscripts for the
BENEFIT of his Family.



V O L I.

WOLVERHAMPTON: Printed by G. SMART.

S E R M O N S

O N

SEVERAL SUBJECTS

A N D

O C C A S I O N S

IN TWO VOLUMES

BY BENJAMIN CLEMENT, A. B.

The Prebendary of the Collegiate Church, and Rector
of St. John's Church, (St. John's, St. John's, St. John's)
and Vicar of a Rectory in the County of Devon.

Published from the Author's Manuscript for the



V O L . 2

WOLVERHAMPTON: Printed by G. S. HART.

TO
THE GENEROUS
SUBSCRIBERS
THESE TWO VOLUMES
OF SERMONS
ARE WITH
GRATITUDE AND RESPECT
DEDICATED

BY THEIR MUCH OBLIGED

AND VERY HUMBLE SERVANT

REBECCA CLEMENT.

TO

THE GENEROUS
SUBSCRIBERS

THREE TWO VOL VARS

OF SERMONS

THE SERMONS OF

THE REV. JAMES

ARE WITH

THE

CRATITUD AND RUSCH

THE

DEDICATED

THE

THE

BY THEIR HIGH OFFICERS

AND VERY HUMBLE SERVANTS

THE

THE

REBECCA OLIVENT

TO THE
READER.

THE Publication of posthumous Works is an hazardous Attempt, and requires a sufficient Cause to justify it. The present Case pleads Distress, not occasioned either by Indolence or Profuseness, but the Effect of inevitable Necessity. However great the Merit, it was the hard Lot of Mr. Clement so late to obtain, and for so little a While to possess any Preferment, that every Art of Prudence, and every Effort of Industry, were in vain exerted to raise a competent

petent Provision for his Family. To carry on the Education therefore, and promote the Welfare of his Children, *young and helpless* Children, their unfortunate Mother hath (not without Reluctance) been induced to take this Liberty with his Sermons : Sermons composed indeed by a Man of Genius, Learning, and Judgment ;---but whose Life was a Life of constant Labour,---whose assiduous Attendance upon a † School, and the common Duties of his Office, left for these and other Studies Nothing but Fragments of Time, and very few Hours of Leisure. It would be an Injustice to his Memory not to observe likewise, that they were written merely

† Formed with Talents to shine in an higher. Station this Lover of Science, having left University College in Oxford, immediately began, and until Death continued, to preside over a School, first in his native Town of Dudley in Worcestershire, and afterwards in the neighbouring Town of Wolverhampton in Staffordshire, with much Skill and unwearied Application.

for

To the Reader.

for the Use of a private Audience, without any Intention or even Suspicion of being exposed to the public View; upon which Account it is hoped, that they will escape the Severity of Criticism, and be perused with Candour by the learned Reader.

---And let not the Editor bear the Blame of Inaccuracies and Errors, owing principally to the Interlineation and Obscurity of the Copies, and by the Care and Attention of the Printer hardly to be avoided,---nor incur the Censure of greater Imperfections, as he hath not presumed to deviate from the Manuscripts of the Author. If under his discerning Eye they had been revised, and prepared by his masterly Hand;---these Volumes would have exhibited a fairer Specimen of his Abilities, and gained him a more distinguished Place among

mong those venerable Names, which in Defence of Religion and Virtue have opened the inestimable Stores of Reason and Eloquence, and done immortal Honour to their Times and Country.---But from the Grave there is no Protection. This ingenious and worthy Divine is now, alas! lost to the World: And his surviving Relations, who live to bewail his untimely Fate, being unable to give a better Testimony of Gratitude, humbly present to their Benefactors these his Remains, and the sincere Thanks of *the Fatherless and the Widow.*

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vil*

C O N T E N T S.

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Errata in the first Volume.

PAGE 1. for 56 read 60. p. 5. l. 4, 5. for *past Things* read *Things long past*. P. 12. l. 2. for *Variety* read *Variety*. P. 13. l. 18. for *conspires* read *conspire*. P. 74. l. 16. for *every* read *any*. P. 88. l. 9. *dele* into. P. 90. l. 5. for *shall* read *shalt*. P. 133. l. 9. for *tookest* read *took*. P. 219. l. 21. at the end *dele* Hyphen. P. 227. l. 2. for *the Rest*, read *the rest*;

S E R M O N I.

PSALM cxix. 56.

*I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy Com-
mandments.*

TH E great Conditions, which the Gospel proposes, by which Men must be saved, are Faith and Repentance; — To believe in the Salvation which God offers by Jesus Christ, and to be *careful to maintain good Works*. The Necessity of both these Qualifications is seen and granted. *Not to believe* in Jesus is to make God a Liar: *Not to obey* the Gospel is plainly renouncing all the Hopes it offers. But Men fancy they have found out a way of compounding the Matter; that it is possible to reconcile the Pleasures of Sin with the Expectations which Religion furnishes. While Health and Spirits last, they purpose to *rejoice* in their

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Youth,

2 S E R M O N I.

Youth, and to walk in the way of their Hearts! And when Conscience interferences, and reproaches them with forgetting God; when the Witness within calls up their Transgressions to their Remembrance, and shews them, how often and how long they have trampled on that Religion which teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live sober, and righteous, and godly in the World, Men presume not to justify their Conduct, but still resolve to sin on, in Hopes of healing all at last by a sincere Repentance. Their Behaviour is the Psalmist's Rule reversed. *He made haste and delayed not to keep God's Commandments:* Well knowing the Uncertainty of Life, and that *no wicked Thing can dwell with God.* But these Men put off the great Business of Life—*Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.* This great Business they adjourn from Time to Time, till at length *the evil Days come, when the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars begin to be darkened*—when old Age with its Retinue of Infirmities has laid its palsied Hand upon them,

S E R M O N I. 3

them, and *the Night is come in which no Man can work.*

The extreme Folly of such a Behaviour I shall endeavour to make you sensible of, and how hard a Task it is, when sinful Habits have corrupted our Judgments, darkened our Minds, and poisoned our Affections, how hard, in such Circumstances, it is for those to *do Good*—who have long *delayed to keep God's Commandments.*

And this will very plainly appear, if we form a just Notion of Repentance, and are sensible, that to be in such a State as our Lord Jesus Christ has called us to, and God will accept and reward, we must both know the Truths of Religion and practise its Commandments,

These Points cannot well be disputed. And hence it is demonstrable, I think, that a late Repentance deserves always to be suspected—and that by delaying their Reformation

mation Men run the hazard of not reforming at all.

This is true, in the first Place, with respect to Knowledge, which is the Foundation of all Religion. Let any one consider with Attention the Manner in which the Soul is united to the Body—the strict Connexion there is betwixt the Intelligence that thinks within us, and that corporeal System to which this Intelligence is joined. For we are not pure Spirits: Our Soul is, as it were, immerfed in Matter; and on the Disposition of this Matter depends the Success of our Endeavours in the search of Truth, and consequently in the Business of Religion.

Now, it is certain, that every Age and Season of Life does not find the Body so properly disposed, and equally qualified to give the Mind a Freedom and Facility of thinking and reflecting. The Springs of the Brain are relaxed and worn out with Years; the Senses are blunted, the Spirits evaporate, the Blood freezes in the Veins, and a dark
Veil

S E R M O N I. 5

Veil overspreads all the Powers of the Soul. Hence the Dulness and slow Sense of old Age : Hence a Memory for nothing but past Things, and an almost universal Decay of Apprehension and Judgment, Whereas in those that are less advanced in Years, the Mind is Master of itself, the Memory does its Office faithfully, the Conception of things is distinct and clear, and the Soul is pliable to any Form. If we delay therefore to inform ourselves in the Knowledge of Religion, till Age has frozen our Blood, and darkened our Reason, and enfeebled our Memory, and implanted Prejudice and Obstinacy; it is hardly possible we should be in a Condition to acquire that Knowledge, without which our Religion cannot be rational and acceptable to God, nor give us any solid Comfort in Afflictions, or sufficient Support under Temptations.

It follows, therefore, in the first Place, with respect to what is speculative in the work of our Salvation, that the Difficulties of Repentance grow by Delays. Youth
is

6 S E R M O N . I

is the Season for acquiring Knowledge, in which you must *search the Scriptures*, and may with most Success apply to the Study of Religion. This hopeful Age is the Time to gain an Habit of raising yourselves above sensible Things, and to fill the Soul with religious Principles, before the World hath taken up, and engaged its Capacity.

But the danger of *delaying to keep God's Commandments* is capable of still stronger Demonstration, when we consider Religion on the side of Practice. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God* is a Duty of all Religions, professed by every Sect, and in the Mouth of every Man. When we consider God's goodness in giving us Being, and making us rational Creatures, his Care in making such liberal Provision for our temporal Preservation and for our eternal Happiness, his mercy in sending his Son to redeem us from Death, and to procure Pardon for the greatest of Sinners upon their true Repentance, we see it is the plain Duty of every Christian to *love God and the Lord that hath bought him—to*
love

love him with all his Heart and Mind and Soul. This is the Principle that must animate his Conduct, the Temper that is to rule his Life, and be at all Times the prevailing Disposition of his Heart. But now if you have lived *without God in the World*, if the best of your Days have been spent in a Forgetfulness of him, can you when Sickness comes, can you in that dark and gloomy Time, when Life is run off to the Dregs, can you when you are *walking through the Valley of the shadow of Death*,—can you possibly find Leisure in those Hours of Turbulence and Distraction to kindle in your Bosom that sacred Flame, that sincere and fervent Love for the blessed God, your Redeemer, without which all Devotion is Hypocrisy, and all Religion in Vain. If indeed this Disposition and Habit of Soul can be so suddenly acquired—it is to no Purpose to preach against Delay. But is it reasonable to think, that so great a Change can be wrought so suddenly, and at a Time so unlikely, when the Spirits are gone and Reason itself is expiring? Can the whole Bent
of

8 S E R M O N I.

of the Inclinations be changed in a Moment?

This contradicts the constant invariable Experience of all Mankind, and is opposite to every Thing we know of the Nature of inveterate Habits. An Habit, it is certain, cannot be contracted without practising those Actions, from which alone it derives its Existence, and when an Habit is once formed and rooted, it becomes very difficult to change it. The Scripture compares the Repentance of those who have got an Habit of Wickedness to Events that are both hopeless and impossible. *Can the Æthiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? Then may you also do Good, that are accustomed to do Evil.*

As therefore to form corporeal Habits, the Actions from whence they spring must often be repeated, so likewise to acquire religious Habits, we must often practise religious Actions; nay we must practise them longer and in much greater Numbers than

S E R M O N I. 9

is necessary to form a wicked Habit. Every Man feels in himself the melancholy Reason of this. For Habits of Vice are agreeable to our natural Tempers. They spring up spontaneously from those seeds of Corruption which we bring into the World with us: They spread without Culture, and thrive naturally.

But Virtue is the slow, laborious Result of repeated Self-denials, Hardships, and Difficulties. The Habits of it are directly opposite to many of our Inclinations. They combat our Passions, and do Violence to our Natures; and we have a double Task, when we would become Christians, to pluck down and to build up again; and like the *Israelites*, (in *Nehemiah* iv. 17.) who were rebuilding the Walls of *Jerusalem*, we must labour with one Hand, and *hold a Weapon in the other*, equally employed in producing new Habits of Virtue, and in destroying an inveterate Proneness to do Evil.

This is the general Way in which Habits of Goodness can be formed, namely by
C God's

God's Grace concurring with our own serious and often repeated Endeavours. How great therefore is the Folly of those, who *delay to keep God's Commandments*. We imagine, it seems, that inveterate Habits may be easily rooted out, and new ones planted in their Room; and all perhaps by the Force of a Minister's Exhortations, and the near Approaches of Death, by the Help of a few hasty Reflections, and troubled Thoughts concerning one's past Life, confusedly expressed in some general Confession and short Petitions for Mercy. And may it not as reasonably be expected, that a Man should practise an Art to which he was never educated, or talk a Language to which he is an entire Stranger. Such is the Folly of those, who expect to become pious and virtuous and disengaged from the World in a Moment, without acquiring those Graces and Virtues by a long and serious Diligence in the Practice of them.

This is indeed the general Nature of Evil Habits; but it may possibly be imagined
never

S E R M O N I. 11

nevertheless, that in extraordinary Circumstances the Case is different, and that a mighty Resolution will conquer Difficulties, that seem insuperable. Though vicious Customs naturally rob us of our Strength, yet Nature, when it is greatly irritated and stirred, will do strange Things. Now the prospect of Death, and the near View of another World is of a Nature to awaken all the Powers of the Soul, and raise a Sort of Resolution that hardly any Difficulty can resist.

This then is the Day fixed for your Repentance, when a mortal Sickness is upon you and Death appears in Sight. And on this, it seems, you are contented to risque the Hopes you have of *escaping the Damnation of Hell*. But for God's sake, what Expectations can you build on such a Ground as this? Am I sure in this severe extremity of Nature; am I sure, that I shall have my Senses about me? Or shall I make a proper use of them to root out all Vice, and implant in its stead the Principles of *Righteousness and true Holiness*?

But tell me then, who has ensured to you a Death so calm as this? Amidst that Variety and Complication of Dangers, which surround us, exposed to such numberless Accidents which kill in a Moment, how can we expect a leisurely Approach of Death, and a solemn Notice of our Departure!

But supposing that you die in your Bed by the Violence and Decays of Sickneſs,—tell me once more—did you never contemplate a dying Man in the Hours of Agony, nor obſerve the Diſadvantages under which he ſtruggles. Is this, think you, a fit Season for Thought and Reflection, when one is in the Arms of a ſwift Meſſenger from God, that brings us Tidings of our preſent Diſſolution? When a Man ſuffers that Extremity of Anguiſh which throws all the Soul into Confuſion, when Stupefaction darkens the liveliest Imagination, and blunts the ſharpeſt Wit—when Lethargies ſuſpend or obliterate the Underſtanding, and Deliriums oppreſs and ſwallow its rational Powers. Go now and draw the Curtäin, look on that
expiring

expiring Creature, view that poor Corps, not quite motionless indeed, but quite lost to Thought and destitute of all Sense and Meaning,—and tell me if this be the Hour of Repentance? Can the strongest Reason recollect itself in such Circumstances, and put in Execution the vain purposes of a Death-bed Reformation?

But suppose, that by the singular Mercy of Heaven you are visited with one of those fatal Sicknesses, which leisurely, and by slow Steps conducts you down to the Grave? May not you then be able to return to God and Virtue, and make your Salvation sure? But are not you daily the melancholy Witnesses of what passes on these Occasions? Our own Love of Life, and every Friend that visits us, conspires to flatter us with the hopes of a Recovery. As we do not think, that our Time is come—we do not consider this as the Season of our Repentance, which is still adjourned to a farther Day. The sick Man, in the mean Time, wears away: The Distemper saps, and insensibly consumes his

his Strength: The Body wastes, though the Mind is still unawakened, and the poor Man finds himself at last in the Arms of Death, before he has well considered that he is mortal.

But on the most favourable Supposition, that you are blest in your last Sickness with a clear unclouded Reason, and are convinced that your last Day is approaching—I ask, is not the bare Thought of this, the single Apprehension that the present Scene is shutting up, and your Lot of everlasting Happiness or Misery depending—is not this sufficient to unhinge your Reason, and destroy your Peace for ever? A wicked Man, that perceives himself dying, and feels the World sinking under him, with a Mind undistracted by Pain—what an Agony of Reflections must he suffer?—I say nothing of the many and various Distractions inseparable from these sad Moments—that a Physician must be sent for, and Endeavours used to prop this *House of Clay, whose Foundation is in the Dust*; that the Man's Affairs are to be set in Order; that

he

he must bid adieu to his Family, take a last Leave of his Friends, reconcile himself to the Grave. But seriously,---is it a Time amidst so many affecting Objects, in the midst of so much Tumult and Distraction, is it a Time to think of Religion, to recollect and review the Circumstances of a Man's past Life, to restore an ill gotten Substance, to do Justice to the Reputation of his Neighbour which he has slandered, to *make him a clean Heart and renew a right Spirit within him*? The Truth is, that to do this is the proper Business of our whole Lives, the Work allotted us by him who sent us into the World, the Employment for which our best Days and strongest Spirits are not sufficient without the Concurrence of God's auxiliary Grace. And how then can a weak, distracted Mind, that has *delayed to keep God's Commandments*, and is hardened and lost in wicked Habits, be able to accomplish this? *Can the Æthiopian change his Skin?*

It is true, if you send for a Minister in your last Extremities, he perhaps in very
Pity

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Pity and Compassion may be afraid to say the worst. We are summoned perhaps, and, as it generally happens, too late to comfort and pray for, a dying Man, who has lived, as too many do, without thinking of God, and his latter End. There we find a Family in Tears, and see Grief and Despair strongly painted in the Faces of his lamenting Friends. In these sad Circumstances what shall the Messengers of God do? Shall we speak roundly and plainly? Shall we tell the dying Man, that mere Terror is but a suspicious Friend to Virtue, that all this extempore Repentance is generally unsolid and useless, that of those who seem to repent upon a Death-bed, few, very few indeed do it sincerely---that for one Degree of Probability, that such a Conversion is founded in the Love of God and Virtue, there are a Thousand to prove it the Effect of Terror and Constraint only--say what we will to the contrary---yet all this is strictly true---and it is fit at least that the living should know it, if we are not suffered to deal so freely with the Dying. No Promises we can make in your last Moments,
unless

unless the Testimony of your Conscience confirm them, are of Value to deserve a Moment's Consideration. The Terms of Religion are plain and express: *Without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.* And these Tears which are shed at the near Approaches of Death, this constrained Submission to the Will of God, these sudden Resolutions of obeying him, all this is not Holiness. In vain shall we talk to you in another Language. There is, there is a faithful uncorrupt Witness, even Conscience, placed in the Breast of every Man. We may say Peace; but Conscience will answer, *there is no Peace to the wicked.* The Minister may say with the Psalmist; *lift up your Heads, O ye Gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting Doors;* whilst Conscience more justly calls out to the *Rocks and Mountains; fall on us and hide us from the Face of him that sitteth upon the Throne; and from the wrath of the Lamb.*

What then is more evidently reasonable, than *in the Days of Youth to remember our Creator,* to be virtuous betimes, and give

Religion the first Possession of our Souls; And if there be any who have unhappily neglected this, till they are advanced in Years and are grown grey in Iniquity, the great Difficulty of reforming vicious Habits, and the Danger of perishing in their Sins, ought in all Reason to convince them of the instant Necessity of *ceasing to do Evil and learning to do well*. When Conscience therefore checks, and *sets before us the Things which we have done*, let us not fly from ourselves; let us not say, as *Felix* did to *Paul*, *go thy way for this Time*:—But let us rather improve the present Opportunity. Let each of us, for it is every Man's Duty, let us take the Psalmist's Method, let us *make haste and delay not to keep God's Commandments*. *This one Thing let us do* after the Apostle's Example, *forgetting those Things which are behind, and reaching forward to those Things which are before*, let us press towards the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N II.

LUKE xvi. 31.

If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the Dead,

SO unanimously do the Reason of Things, the plain Precepts of Religion, and our own true Interests conspire to press Virtue upon our Minds and Lives, that it is surprising a Thing so absurd as Wickedness should gain Acceptance among reasonable Beings. But Men consult not the Dictates of cool Reason : Infatuated by their Lusts, they seek their Happiness in Vice. And when Passion is once retained on the wrong Side, it labours incessantly, and generally with too much Success to bias and delude the Understanding. Hence a Reason is fancied for Indulgences that Religion for-

bids, and if no Reason can be found, strong Inclination becomes itself a Reason, and shall prevail against the united Force of Conscience and the Fear of God.

When therefore Men have burst the Bonds of Conscience, and Vice turning Philosopher begins to doubt of a *Resurrection from the Dead, and the Life of the World to come*, it is not strange that Men believe, or fancy they believe, what common Sense rejects. “When Men’s Interests and Passions,” as it has been observed, “mingle in a religious Debate, a very little Colour, a very trifling Pretence, even the shadow of an Argument will corrupt the Judgment, or preponderate against Judgment.” But this is an unnatural State of Mind, and therefore of no Duration. It may last whilst Health lasts, or till afflictive Events come to press the Mind. But then Reflection comes with double Violence;—and what can the Sinner think of God and of himself? It is most certain, that the supreme Author of Nature is of purer Eyes than to endure

endure *Iniquity*; and the Conclusion therefore is as certain, that without Repentance the wicked have no Hope. But what is Repentance? Or how shall they begin a Change, which they have accustomed themselves to laugh at? Will Reason lend its Assistance? But Reason has been so long a Slave, that it knows not how to govern. What Succours then may be expected from Revelation? Will *Moses and the Prophets* persuade them to repent? Alas! Habits of thinking are as stubborn and unperuasible as Habits of acting. The known Principles of Religion have lost all Influence upon them. What have they therefore to do, but to sit down and wish for Evidence, and wait for stronger Motives, to think Men act wisely in making the most of the present Life, till they have better Reason to expect another, and to enjoy the Pleasures and Profits of Sin, (for this they generally mean by making the most of Life,) till a clearer Proof be given, that God will be an *Avenger to execute Wrath* upon all such. Hear one of them speaking the Sentiments of the rest;

rest; and in soliciting *Abraham* to employ some new Means for the Conversion of his Brethren, observe how he insinuates an Excuse of himself, taxing Providence as using too weak Methods to reclaim him. *Nay Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the Dead, they will repent. The Father of the faithful* had very different Thoughts and decides clearly against such Expectations. *If they believe not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the Dead.*

A Determination this, that may perhaps seem incredible. For who is so hardened and obdurate, as to be unmoved by so solemn and terrific a Warning, and Assurance of a Judgment to come? A Messenger coming express from the burning Lake, the Apparition of a dead Acquaintance returned from that Place of Torments, to declare that there is a God, and that Virtue is his Law, to testify that *the wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*, surely this is able to rouse
and

and awaken those that are *dead in Trespasses and Sins*. Yet I hope to convince you, that however such a Method might succeed in a few particular Instances, that generally, and upon the whole of the Case, it is true, what *Abraham* decides, if Men *hear not Moses and the Prophets*, if a standing Revelation of the great Duties of Religion, and the *Wrath of God against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men*, is not sufficient to restrain them from Ungodliness and Unrighteousness, but they will go on to indulge irregular and foolish Passions, till an Habit of Wickedness is formed, it is not likely, it is hardly possible, they should be persuaded, though one rose from the Dead.

For i. is the Testimony of a dead Man returning from another World a convincing Evidence, that there is a Judgment and a Life to come?—To what Exceptions both many in Number and of various Kinds this Sort of Evidence stands liable, I shall not here consider.—But grant it as full as it may be, one Observation holds incontestably, that

that the Case before us is not a Case of Evidence so much as of Inclination ; nor is it Proof that is wanted but proper Dispositions of Heart to consider and embrace it. The Man does not repent, because he is in Love with his Lusts, not because it is not sufficiently evident that Virtue is the Law of God, and that all vicious and brutal Choices must provoke his Wrath and Indignation. How indeed can common Sense and a plain Understanding think otherwise ? But to judge rightly even of very clear and evident Truths something more is required than common Sense and Understanding. This is daily verified in common Life. For are there not many who ruin their present Interests, who destroy their Health, who dissipate their Fortunes, and that in defiance of Evidence so clear, that they and all the World are convinced of the fatal consequences issuing from their Behaviour ? These unhappy People want no Proof of the Mischief they are doing themselves ; but Evidence cannot controul the rage of Passion. Reason will satisfy the reasonable : But what has Reason

to do with Obstinacy and Perverseness? As well may you hope to talk down a Whirlwind, or to calm a Tempest by the Force of Demonstration. In vain will you add strength to Evidence: Where the Inclinations are bribed, Men examine into Truth, like corrupt Judges, with the wicked Intention of betraying it. In vain will you press them with the natural Tendencies of Things; for when Reason is against a Man, a Man will be against Reason; and an Increase of Evidence in such Cases serves only to encrease and inflame the Opposition to it.

If this Reasoning does not convince, let us go and consult Experience. The Scriptures will supply an Instance full to the Point in the case of the *Jews*. An Apparition of one risen from the Dead, whatever Advantage of Evidence it carries with it above that of a standing Revelation, must convince on this Account, because the Evidence is personal, and comes home to your Senses. This very kind of Evidence, we have plain example, could not satisfy nor

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reclaim

reclaim a wicked and obdurate People, whom Vice had prejudiced. Our Saviour preached such Duties to the degenerate *Jews*, as they had not been accustomed to hear from their *Pharisaical* Teachers. At this that gross People take Exceptions. *How can these Things be*, they ask, and refuse to believe him. Still ready nevertheless to surrender to proper Evidence, if you be, say they, a *Teacher sent from God*, produce then your Credentials, and shew us a Sign from Heaven. Jesus accordingly restores the Sick to Health, stills the Rage of the Winds and Sea, and over-rules all the Laws of Nature. Instead now of acknowledging him a Messenger from God, they paint him as a Missionary of the Devil, and ascribe his Miracles to the Powers of Darkness.—But, perhaps, *if one went unto them from the Dead*, they will repent. Here, then, is the very Evidence in Question, *Lazarus* recalled from the Mansions of departed Spirits, and witnessing to the Truth of the Doctrines of our blessed Saviour. And do the *Jews* believe him? Nothing less. Instead of being determined
by

by this Evidence, you find them next *consulting that they might put Lazarus also to Death.* *John xii. 10.* A plain, a speaking Proof this, however wicked Men may deem of the Apparition of one from the Dead, as a Light not to be resisted, and a Way of Evidence, that must flash Conviction, yet that it will not do for a vicious Man without another irresistible Impression upon his Will. This would indeed banish Vice and Wickedness from the World, but then it would at the same Time banish Virtue too: And Men would live religiously for the same Reason, that a Piece of Mechanism performs it's Motions, because it is so set, and cannot possibly go otherwise,

The Testimony of one risen from the Dead, however strong an Evidence in itself, is not, we see, capable of persuading the guilty Veteran to Repentance. Let us now consider,

2. Whether it stands fair to succeed, as it is more effectual to seize and fix his

Attention to religious Considerations. Attention is indeed the Principle that leads to Vice or Virtue. It is often and much reflecting on the Motives of Religion, that can support us in the Love and Fear of God. It will likewise be confessed, that the first Shock of the Re-appearance of a dead Friend must give a severe Alarm, and throw the Conscience into strong Convulsions; and Nature in this Agony of Surprise would certainly do it's utmost. But all the Terror and Evidence of one returned from the Dead, to *testify* to Sinners *lest they also come to the Place of Torment*, would be ineffectual, if not to *convince*, yet however to *reclaim* them; and that for the following Reasons.

An habitual Contempt of Evidence renders a Man incapable of Conviction almost in any Way. He that sins against the plain Light of his own Mind, and accustoms himself to live in Opposition to Truth, not only tramples upon Reason, but endangers the very Faculty. Now Men abandon'd in their Morals, who have lived themselves into a Be-
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lief that Religion is false, or into Doubts concerning the Sufficiency of it's Attestations, have habituated themselves to a Contempt of Evidence in all respects so abundantly full to the purposes of Conviction, and a Defiance of Motives so sufficient to influence every reasonable Mind, that it is not easily conceivable, by what further Arguments and Motives their Attention can be influenced. That there is a God I will take for granted: For Religion pre-supposes Reason in Man, a Capacity to read in Nature the plain Characters of it's infinite Creator, a God who is the supreme Governor of the World, who *speaks and it is done*, who *commands and it stands fast*, who has Power to cast the Objects of his Displeasure *Soul and Body into Hell*, and to make those that love him happy beyond Imagination and to all Eternity. Reason writes it with a Sun-beam, that God is an Hater of all that work Wickedness;—and can it be well with those whom God hates? God “delights in Virtue, and that which he delights in must be happy.” But is it happy here? Is not the present Scene a promiscuous Dis-
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penfation of Good and Evil, where *all Things come alike to all, to the Clean and to the Unclean*? If no Difcrimination be made in this World, nay, if Virtue is often miserable and Vice as often prospers and triumphs; (and is not all this evident to Eyesight?) surely the plainest Conclusion of Reason is, that therefore the *Day is appointed when God will judge the World in Righteousness*, that the State is ordained in which *he will render to all according to their Works*. Scripture comes in aid of Reason, clears up and confirms the Hopes of Virtue, and adds new Terror to the Fears and Suspicions of Guilt, *having brought Life and Immortality to Light*, and promised eternal Pleasures to all that *fear the Lord and walk in his Ways*, and threatened the never ending Torments of God's Wrath to all that *forget him and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

Now through all these Terrors which God's Goodness has planted round us to guard our Virtue, against all these Motives to a blameless Life does the abandoned Christian

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Christian make his way to Guilt, and sins against the Sense and Knowledge, the Hopes and Fears, the Helps and Assistances which the Gospel affords, and under the use of all the Remedies it has provided for the healing of our Natures, and the Acquisition of Holiness. This now is the Heart to be reclaimed by the Appearance of one risen from the Dead. But can you imagine any Evidence sufficiently glaring, any Miracle that is startling enough to recover a Mind so entirely vitiated and depraved, to cure a Conscience that is seared and become insensible. What Motive can be offered more alluring than the Joys of Angels; what Terror more effectual to dissuade than the Sufferance of *everlasting Burnings*?

To these Considerations I might add the domineering Influence of evil Habits, which by Inveteracy grow into our Natures, and become a part of ourselves, a part so essentially and inseparably our's, that *the Æthiopian can as easily change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots*; or if the Separation be not
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naturally impossible, that cannot however be made without the greatest Anguish and Agony both of Body and Mind, with a Torment that may well be compared to the cutting off a *right Hand* or *plucking out a right Eye*. Pause now a Moment on this, and judge what would be the Case of an hardened Sinner, that had seen one of his wicked Companions returned from the Abodes of Woe to testify against his Vices. Why, doubtless, the Man, would be, to the last degree, startled and amazed: Like one oppressed with a sudden Stroke of ill News, you would see him at first all Terror and Dejection. But when he begins to converse again with the World, and to renew his Commerce with his gay Acquaintance, when the Tide of Passion returns and overflows and obliterates from his Memory all the Traces of the ghastly Visitant, tormented with the constant Irritation of Evil Habits, solicited with warm Inclinations, importuned by the Pleasures of Life, and goaded to Vice by a perpetual Pruriency of impetuous Desires, judge what a transient Terror would avail
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against a settled Habit : Or if you doubt your Capacity to judge, observe how the Matter stands in fact. How, for instance, did the hardened *Pharoah* in a parallel Case behave ? While *Egypt* groans under Plagues ; how importunate are his Prayers, how large his Promises of a better Obedience ; but no sooner are the divine Visitations withdrawn, than he returns to his old Question, *who is the Lord that I should serve him ?* So does the Malefactor behave under the Sentence of the Law. So does the Sinner whom Sickness has reduced to the Borders of the next World. In the dark and gloomy Time, when he is *walking through the Valley of the Shadow of Death*, how deeply convinced is he of the Wisdom of being religious, how entirely satisfied of the Madness of those, who take more Care to provide for this short Life, than to prepare for that State, that will soon begin and never know an End ? Troubled to the last Degree for his wicked Life, he makes the most solemn Promises and Professions of becoming better : God mercifully spares him : See, he returns from

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the Confines of the Grave, like a Messenger from the other World, and with an Attention as much awakened, as a real Messenger could give him. And what now may be expected from these hopeful Circumstances? What do all his Vows of Reformation come to? Alas, all vanishes with his Recovery: All his Righteousness is *as the Morning Cloud, and as the early Dew which passeth away.*

God has, in short, provided a clear, a plain Rule for Men to walk by, supported on sufficient Evidence, if Men will regard Evidence, backed by the highest Promises, if Promises can influence, and enforced by the awfulest Threatenings to direct and persuade them to *Godliness of Living.* But no Provision is made for the Obstinaey of hardened Reprobates, whom not a Messenger from the Dead would probably reclaim, and to whom therefore no Messenger will be sent. Do you search the Scriptures, and are you nevertheless without a Sense of your Duty to God and Man, unpersuaded by

Moses

Moses and the Prophets, by *Jesus* and the Apostles? Blame not the want of Evidence, but, as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* advises, *Heb. iii. 12. take heed of an Evil Heart of Unbelief.* There seems to be but very little Ground of Complaint that we want Evidence, when plain Honesty of Heart will effectually guide us. *If any Man will do God's will he shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God. John vii. 17.* A common Understanding will afford a sufficient Light, if Evil Passions do not cloud it, and fill the whole Man with Darkness.

Let us therefore be contented with the Ways and the Evidence of God. It is not his Will to conduct us to eternal Life, by offering invincible Demonstration to our Understanding, or by operating irresistibly upon the Will. But the Great Doctrines of Religion both natural and revealed, the indispensable Rules of Duty, the divine Authority of *Jesus* and his Apostles, and the Certainty of a Judgment Day when all Men shall receive according to their Works, are in

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the Scriptures set forth with a Clearness, and confirmed with an Evidence sufficient to satisfy every honest and reasonable Mind. For those who can resist this Evidence, there is indeed no Remedy provided,

May God give us the Grace seriously to improve the Knowledge imparted to us, diligently to study the sacred Book, and earnestly to *apply our Hearts unto Wisdom*, even that Wisdom which the word of God teaches, which *is first pure, then peaceable*, not contentious nor perverse, but *gentle and easy to be entreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits*. James iii. 17. They who believe *not Moses and the Prophets*, or live uninfluenced by their Belief, may *think it strange that you run not with them to the same Excess of Vice and Riot*. 1 Peter iv. 4. *But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy Faith, praying in the holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the Love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal Life*. Jude xx. 21.

S E R M O N II. 37

Of that Mercy may God make us all
partakers, and give us the Grace to *seek it*
by a patient Continuance in well doing through
Jesus Christ our Lord.

S E R M O N.

S E R M O N

Of that Mercy may God make us all
partakers, and give us the grace to love
as a Father's Commandment is that we should love
John 13:34-35

S E R M O N

S E R M O N III.

J O H N V. 14.

*Behold thou art made whole : Sin no more, lest
a worse Thing come unto thee.*

TH E S E are the Words of our Saviour to the impotent Man, whom he had miraculously healed. The Fact is related in the preceding Verses of the Chapter : And the Text contains a Rule for his future Conduct, enforced by the awful Consideration of greater and severer Punishments to be inflicted upon him, if he should wickedly forget his present merciful Deliverance, and relapse again into his former Offences.

An affecting Caution it is likewise to every Man who has done amiss and dealt wickedly, and afterwards repented of his Guilt, and endeavoured to make his Peace with
God,

40 S E R M O N III.

God.—Behold thou art recovered from the Labyrinths of Guilt and Misery: God has accepted thy Contrition and thy Tears: *Thy Sins are forgiven thee*, and thou art replaced in a State of Grace and Salvation;—*Go and Sin no more.*

From which Words I shall take Occasion to enquire

1. How vain and unavailing that Repentance is, which is followed by common and habitual Relapses into Sin; and shall shew

2. That such frequent and customary Relapses both heighten a Man's Guilt, and add to his Danger by increasing the Difficulty of his Repentance afterwards.

Repentance (*Μετανοια*) is a Duty which the Scripture denotes by different Expressions and in various Manners: Sometimes by *Regeneration* or the *new Birth*, by which is meant the new modelling of the animal Passions

S E R M O N III, 41

Passions, and implanting a Principle of Grace and Virtue to direct and controul them: Sometimes by *a new Creature*, an Expression which conveys the same Idea, and signifies the same heavenly Direction given to the Appetites and Affections. But where this Duty is expressed in a plain unfigurative Manner, it is described by its Effects upon the Lives of Men, where it produces the proper Fruits of Repentance; *a ceasing to do Evil, and learning to do well.*

Now considering Repentance in it's first Principle, a Change of Heart, if after this, there is a Return, an immediate habitual Return to those very Sins which it has renounced, can you imagine that the Heart was ever really and effectually changed? Is it credible, that a Man should be absolutely resolved to forbear his wicked Habits, and immediately after, without any Reluctance or Hesitation, renew upon the first Temptation all that Guilt which he professed to abhor and reform? Where the Will is indeed changed,

it has ever a settled Aversion to those Practices, in which it before delighted. And a steady Purpose of Heart is in Truth a much stronger Motive to Action than can be overruled by little Difficulties, or misled by ordinary Seduction. Take a Man, whose Heart is bent upon the Acquisition of Wealth, how hard is it to divert him from his Purpose? You may by superior Abilities deceive him: You may represent his Interest in false Lights, and so make him pursue his Loss instead of his Profit. But never, whilst his Will is steadily fixed, can you persuade him with his Eyes open to make a losing Bargain, or renounce a prospect of certain Gain. Had but the repenting Sinner the same determined Love of God and Virtue, the same fixed Hatred of every Thing immoral and vicious, you would see in him the same steady Pursuit of Virtue, the same constant Avoidance of every Thing that was contrary to Virtue. He might indeed be subject to Slips and Failures in the Course of his Duty, and to the same we are subject in the Prosecution of our temporal Concerns.

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Inadvertences and Surprizes are inseparable from human Nature in it's present Imperfection, whatever Choice we make to ourselves either of Virtue, or Interest. But the general Tenor and Stream of a Man's Actions always runs in the Channel marked out by his ruling Passion, and follows the settled Determination of his own Mind.

It is granted then, that the sincerest Repentance does not imply an absolute and unfinning Obedience for the future, no more than the steadiest Virtue is superior to all Imperfection. But if, after a seeming Change of Heart, there be sudden and frequent Returns to Sin, there is not the shadow of a Likelihood, that this Change ever was an earnest and effectual one. For in other Instances of Men's Conduct, however great you suppose the Infirmary of human Nature, we do not see such strange Appearances of Lightness and Inconstancy. In other Cases wherein Men take Resolutions, and their Interests or their Pleasures are concerned, they hold to them with Firmness, and pur-

sue them with Diligence. Now why must it be supposed, that in the Business of Repentance, when Grace has touched your Heart and *a right Spirit* is renewed within you, why must it be supposed that you are still so frail and unsteady? Why must you weakly believe, that whilst in every other Concern of Life upon which your Hearts are fixed your Behaviour is uniform and of a Piece, you are only subject to Weakness and Unfaithfulness to your Resolutions, when those Resolutions require you to be constant to Virtue and upright in the Service of God? The short Account of the Matter is this. In the Interests and Pleasures of Life Men are in Earnest and act with Vigour. The Will is effectually bent, and powerfully influences their Actions. But when this Earnestness and Vigour appears not in the practice of Religion and Virtue, the plain Reason is, Men's Wills are yet unchanged, no Renovation of Temper, no real Repentance is obtained. Their Hearts have still the same wrong Bias which draws, as it naturally

ly must, into the same wrong and wicked Actions.

It is said, indeed, that Men are frail imperfect Creatures, and the Will of the sincerest Penitent has strong and vehement Enemies to encounter, namely, his own rebellious Passions. This is doubtless true. There is in Men an unhappy Impotence to Good, a fatal Proneness to Evil. But insufficient as of ourselves we are to think a good Thought, *God's Grace is still sufficient for us.* Ask and you shall not want Assistance. No Man, that sincerely desires to do the Will of God, shall ever want the necessary Abilities. Allowing therefore that our Passions are as real and dangerous Enemies, as you are willing to have them thought, yet if the Vow and Promise, which a repenting Sinner makes of persevering in Obedience to God's Law, is sincere, it will at least be stronger than his Passions, and able to subdue them. But who can believe that it is such, when the very contrary is evident, when the Sinner, after his pretended Repen-

tance,

tance, is as great a Slave to his Passions, as disorderly in his Life, as libertine and rakish in his Talk, as blameable, and irregular in his Actions, as he was before. True Repentance is not a half Desire or impotent Wish of Reconciliation with God. It pants incessantly after Innocency and Virtue, bears a strong Aversion to all Sin, and labours earnestly in every Instance of Duty. And where it wants these characteristic Qualities, it is not true, but a vain and unavailing Repentance, unfit for God's Acceptance, and unworthy of any Reward.

Try the Sincerity of such a Repentance by a parallel Case, and observe in what Manner you behave in Matters of much less importance, but such as Men's Wills are earnestly bent upon. You are recovered from a very dangerous Sicknefs, and are afraid of a Relapse. How careful are you to prevent it? What Mortifications do you not submit to? You abstain from your Pleasures, endure Confinement, patiently take the nauseous Draught that is to restore your Health,
and

and observe exactly the disagreeable Regimen that is prescribed for it's Security. And tell me, is the Restoration of your spiritual Health of less Consequence than the Health of the Body? Can you be said to desire sincerely the Recovery of your Minds from the Depths of Sin and Misery, when you neglect the Means necessary to prevent a Relapse into your former Guilt, and walk in the same Way that leads down to the Chambers of eternal Death? To say that those Passions which hurry you into Sin are stronger than those Appetites that oppose the natural Desire of Life, is mere Deceit and Imposition upon yourselves. For name the Sin, name the wicked Action which you are the fondest of: And yet were you assured that the very next Time you are guilty of it, Ruin would instantly ensue, that you would sink immediately into extreme Want, or fall into incurable Sickness, or become the lasting Scorn and Contempt of the World, where is the Man, that upon such Terms, would go and intoxicate himself, that would do a dishonest Action,

that

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that would take the *Members of Christ* and make them the *Members of an Harlot*. Now if as frail as Men are, no more is necessary to keep them innocent, than the Dread of Death as the present Punishment of Transgression, how vain and false is it to say, that your Passions are too strong for your Resolutions, or that you sincerely repent of your Sins, and yet such is the Infirmary of human Nature, that you are not able to forbear them. Men may deceive themselves by such ridiculous Imaginations; but *God is not deceived*. You may alledge human Weakness in your Excuse: But if you are willing enough and strong enough to forbear what is wrong and sinful for the Avoidance of a temporal Death, and yet commit the same Practices without Scruple or Hesitation, when you are threatened with God's Anger and eternal Vengeance, it is plain beyond Contradiction, that your *Heart is not right with God*, that you *fear them indeed which kill the Body and after that have no more that they can do*, but have no just reverence, no real *fear of him*,
which

S E R M O N III. 49

which after he hath killed, hath Power to destroy both Soul and Body in Hell.

When such Men therefore imagine they have repented of their Sins, though they have felt much Concern, and lamented their Guilt with Passion and Tears, if no Reformation follow, if they return again to their Sins; all this is no Proof that they have sincerely repented, and made their Peace with God. These are only the Tears of *Esau*, which though accompanied with strong Crying and Lamentations are not entitled to the Blessing. What God requires of the true Penitent is the same which Men think extremely reasonable to demand from one another, that you should act honestly and uprightly with your Maker, as you would expect Men to deal by you: That you should bring a well disposed Heart to the Study of Religion, earnestly implore the aids of Grace, and diligently improve them to the Purification of your Life and Manners. If you ask and have not, it is because you ask not seriously and fervently. If you receive, but

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make no Use, this is *receiving the Grace of God in Vain*, and acting deceitfully with your Redeemer.—Now if a *Man* had deceived you, you would think it but common Prudence to distrust him afterwards, and reject mere good Words without honest Actions to witness for the Sincerity of them. And why should God be more favourable to you, or treat you otherwise than you think it just and equitable to treat one another. Let us therefore, my Brethren, endeavour earnestly to make our Repentance compleat. Let us reason, as the wise Man, *Ecclus. xxxiv. 25.* teaches us to reason; *He that washeth himself after the touching of a dead Body, if he touch it again, what availeth his washing? So is it with a Man that fasteth for his Sins, and goeth again and doeth the same; who will hear his Prayer? Or what doth his humbling profit him?* You may grieve, and shed Tears and use all the outward Signs of Repentance, but if no real Reformation follow, if you relapse into the same Practices, this is not Repentance, but a new Provocation; an Acknowledgement of your Wick-
edness,

S E R M O N III. 51

edness, and a Resolution to continue in it. The Sorrow which God will accept is thus described by his Prophet (*Ezekiel* xviii. 21. 22.) with whose Words I shall close the present Head of Discourse; *If the wicked will turn from all his Sins that he hath committed, and keep all my Statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die, saith the Lord; all his Transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him, in his Righteousness that he hath done he shall live.* But mark, I beseech you, what follows in the 24th Verse of the same Chapter. *When the righteous turneth away from his Righteousness, when the repenting Sinner cancels his Repentance, and returns afresh to those habitual Sins which he professed to renounce, and committeth Iniquity, and doth according to all the Abominations of the wicked, and impenitent, shall he live? All his Righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned, in his Trespasts that he hath trespassed, and in his Sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.*

52 S E R M O N III.

God of his Mercy give us the Grace seriously to consider these Things, that we may effectually *deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts and live Sober and righteous and godly in the World* for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N IV.

JOHN V. 14.

*Behold thou art made whole ; sin no more, lest
a worse Thing come unto thee.*

RETURNS to Sin after Repentance, like a-Relapse into a bad Distemper after the Patient's Recovery, are of most dangerous Tendency, and threaten the fataleſt Event. Repentance, in the Notion of it, implies a deep Conviction of the Evil, and penal Conſequences of Guilt, that it opposes the divine Will, and tends to the irreparable Ruin of guilty Creatures. To renew our wicked Habits under ſuch a ſenſible Perſuaſion of the dreadful Iſſue of them, is a plain Indication of a Mind enſlaved to the Love of Vice, and loſt to all Fear of God, and Care of a Man's immortal Happineſs. *The laſt State of ſuch an one is worſe than*
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the first: His Return to Vice makes him more guilty than before, is a greater Provocation to God, renders his Case more deplorable and desperate, and will, without a farther Repentance, which it is extremely difficult for him to go through with, plunge him deeper into Hell, and greatly encrease his Damnation,

Having, in a preceding Discourse upon the Text endeavoured to evince, that habitual Relapses into Sin, after a pretended Repentance, are a plain Evidence that our Repentance was not sincere and effectual, I now proceed to shew

2. That such frequent and customary Returns to Vice, and Wickedness add to a Man's Guilt and Danger, render his Repentance extremely difficult, and almost impossible,

In the first Place it is certain, that a Man's falling again into the same habitual Sins, from which he had by Repentance endeavoured to reclaim himself, does not only
renew

renew his Guilt, but revives and redoubles the Fury of those evil Appetites and Passions that hurry him into Guilt. Then the Guilt must be tenfold greater, where Men sin presumptuously, and with their Eyes open, and venture to follow their corrupt Inclinations under the full Sense that they are disobeying God, and mortally wounding their own Souls. If you were persuaded to lament your Sins, to resolve and endeavour to reform them, because wicked Actions are the Reproach of a reasonable Nature, have the Punishments of another World most plainly denounced against them, and will as certainly make a Man for ever miserable, as Felony or Treason will subject him to the Penalty of human Laws, and cost him his Life in this World—yet if after a Conviction of your Guilt, you struggle through all these Motives to a better Life, bear down the Opposition of your Conscience, and plunge again into your former Sins, in Contempt of the Redeemer's Blood, in Defiance of God's Wrath, and the Miseries denounced against those *that obey not the Gospel*, by
 what

what new Motives can you afterwards be recalled to a Sense of your Guilt, and excited to *fly from the Wrath to come*? Not by the Ugliness and shameful Nature of Sin: For this you saw, when you returned to the Monster's Embraces; not by a Sense of God's Mercy in Christ Jesus; for this had no Effect to prevent your relapsing into those Practices which God hates, and Christ died to redeem you from; not the Fear of his Displeasure, for you abandoned his Service after you *knew the Terrors of the Lord*, and did wickedly, when you were convinced that God will by no Means acquit the Guilty. There remains then scarcely any Way to prevent your everlasting Destruction; no Method of Grace which you have not already defied and defeated; no new Terror to reclaim you from the way that *leads down to the Chambers of Death*. Your Condition is far more guilty and dangerous than ever, and yet you have but the same Motives to Repentance and Obedience, those very Motives which by your own Fault have already proved too weak to restrain your Passions, and

and support you in the Discharge of your Duty, which have farther lost a great Deal of their Force and Fitness to work upon your Mind, and reform your Life from the Contempt wherewith you have already treated them, and which you are grown into an Habit of neglecting and despising.

In the 10th Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews (26, 27 Verses) we read, that *if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sin, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation which shall devour the Adversaries.* It is impossible, says the Author of the same Epistle (Chapter vi. 4, 5, 6.) *for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the Heavenly Gift, and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto Repentance.* Now this indeed is spoken by the Apostle concerning Apostasy from the Christian Faith; but holds, nevertheless, to a great degree true in the

Case of those, who from a Course of Sin have become sensible of their Danger, and have been enlightened with the Knowledge of their Duty, and of the fatal Consequences of disobeying it, and yet afterwards in Opposition to their Reason, and against the Reluctances of Conscience have deserted their good Principles, and relapsed afresh into their former impious Practices. *It is impossible*—That is—in the mildest Sense—It is in the last Degree difficult to restore them by Repentance to the Mercy and Acceptance of God.

If you enquire, *why* a Return to Sin makes Repentance afterwards so very hard as to be termed impossible, several Reasons may be given,—namely, the new and high Provocation it offers to the Spirit of God, and its consequent withdrawing from us,—the fresh and additional Strength it gives to Men's evil Inclinations ;—its perverting the Remedies that should heal our Vices into Matter of new Fuel and Temptation to them.

It is the plain Doctrine of Scripture, which unenlightened Reason taught the Heathen World also to believe, that God's Inspiration and Assistance are necessary to conduct and support us in the way of Virtue, and against the Temptations and Terrors by which our Virtue is liable to be misled, or shaken. This Aid of Heaven we are taught and commanded daily and earnestly to implore. But if instead of praying for this Assistance Men obstinately oppose it, renounce the Light it offers, and fall back into the same *horrible Pit*, the same Mire and filthy Practice out of which God's Grace has but just recovered them, what Hope is there, that God should not *depart from us*, as he did from *Saul*, and answer us *no more*, (1 Sam. xxviii. 15.) If we root up those good Inclinations which God's Spirit has planted, stifle those holy Terrors which he has mercifully raised in our Hearts, and by every way of absurd Passion and wicked Indulgence oppose the Workings of this heavenly Influence on our Minds,—have we not Reason to fear, that *his Spirit will not*

always strive with Us, but give us up at last to the Guidance of our own Hearts Lusts, and to follow the bent of our corrupt Imaginations. And this surely is enough to render our Return to God and Virtue extremely difficult, if not impossible. If without him we are able to do nothing, how shall we be able without him to accomplish the most difficult Thing in the World, the Reformation of vicious Habits that are by long Indulgence woven into the very Frame of our Nature. Hear how terribly God threatens such Forsakers of his Grace with the Desertion of his Spirit at a Time when they shall feel and deplore the Want of it, in the Day of Calamity, when Distress and Anguish have overtaken them. Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded, I also will laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your Fear cometh.—Then shall they call upon me but I will not answer, they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; and the Reason of this severe Proceeding is assigned in the 29th Verse of the first Chapter of Proverbs, for that they bated
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Knowledge and did not chuse the Fear of the Lord. They were incorrigible, though convinced of their Guilt, and sinned against the plain and evident Terrors which God had planted around them to secure their Repentance, and Reformation.

But besides our provoking God to withdraw from us, Men's evil Inclinations do moreover receive new Strength and Fury from every Return into Vice, and the same Relapse, which makes them weak and impotent to Good, is a fresh Recruit to their Appetites, and a supply of Spirits to do Evil. By a Repetition of evil Actions an Habit is formed, and a formed Habit ends in Hardness and Insensibility. Thus Vice is engrafted into the Soul, and becomes a second Nature. And what is natural necessitates, and cannot be over-ruled. To this Necessity of doing Evil implanted by Habit and Custom Despair succeeds; and Despair makes it *morally impossible* for the Sinner to repent. This is the deplorable State of those described by St. Paul, (*Eph. iv. 19.*) *Who*
being

being past feeling have given themselves over to Lasciviousness, to work all Uncleaness with Greediness. At first Men look upon a wicked Action with Abhorrence. The first Commission of it is followed with an overwhelming Shame, and intolerable Remorse, and the guilty Creature can scarce bear to shew his Face, or to think of himself with Patience. But by frequent Relapses Shame dies, and Remorse is no more; the Man becomes hardened, assumes *a Whore's Forehead*, grows into Familiarity and Fondness with the beastly Practice, repeats it without Scruple, becomes enslaved to it, and despairing to subdue it resigns himself up entirely to it. Convinced that God is holy and *cannot look upon Iniquity*, and knowing himself lost to all Love of Virtue and Desire of Holiness he abandons all Hopes of Mercy, as he hardly thinks it possible to recover from his Impurities, and to *perfect Holiness*, which alone can intitle him to Mercy. Now though no Man should despair, since *Christ came into the World to save Sinners*, and God is ever ready to receive the true Penitent

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that earnestly desires to be cleansed from his Corruption; yet is this Despair, which is a new Sin, the natural Fruit of frequent Relapses into evil Habits, and an *evil Heart of Unbelief*, which is the Source of them. And when Men are past Hope, as well as *past Feeling*, let any one judge how hard it must be to *renew* such unhappy Creatures to *Repentance*.

Especially if it be farther considered, that the abandoning a Man's Repentance, and renewing his Guilt, after he hath made himself deeply sensible of the horrid Nature and fatal Consequences of it, not only is the greatest Insult and Outrage that can be offered to the infinite Majesty and Mercy of the great and good God, not only gives new Fury to our rekindled Appetites and Passions, but does farther disable the Sinner to repent and return to God by perverting the Remedies that should heal his Vices into Matter of fresh Fuel and Temptation to them. What indeed can we think of faithless Creatures, that repent of their Repentance, and
sink

sink into the same Practices, of which they have but just acknowledged the beastly Nature and fatal Tendency? What can we hope of a Man that has twenty times bewailed his Guilt, and vowed to reform, and twenty times *returned like the Dog to his Vomit*. Did you wish his Salvation with the same Concern that you labour after your own; yet by what Reasons and Arguments can you hope to persuade him? There is no Motive that has not already been urged to him in vain; no Truth important to his Happiness, which he has not considered and rejected; no Instance of Virtue, or Example of the fatal Issues of Vice, that he has not reviewed and despised. May it not be said of such Offenders, in the Language of the Prophet, (*Jeremiah xxx. 12, 13.*) *Thy Bruise is incurable, and thy Wound is grievous. There is none to plead thy Cause, that thou mayest be bound up; thou hast no healing Medicines.*

The Truth is, a customary Return to Sin, after our Repentance of it, is a complicated Guilt, that mingles Ingratitude and Contempt

S E R M O N IV. 65

tempt with Disobedience. God's Mercy in pardoning a Man's past Offences is made the Reason of repeating them. And what is this, but to be wicked *because God is good, to sin because Grace abounds, whose Damnation* the Apostle pronounces *just*. Were you assured, the next deliberate, wilful Sin you commit, the next Time you are guilty of the Sins of Uncleanness, the next Time you are intemperate, or act dishonestly, the next Time you profane the Sabbath, or *take God's Name in Vain*, that *the Door* of Mercy *would be shut* against you, and though with the sincerest Grief, and the most passionate Repentance you should cry out *Lord, Lord, open unto us*, yet the irreversibile Sentence should be pronounced, *I know you not, ye workers of Iniquity, depart* into devouring Flames—where is the Man in his Senses, who believes there is an Heaven and an Hell, that would not, in such a Case, *deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and live Sober, and righteous and godly in the World?* It is plain then, if Men renew their Guilt, after Vows of Reformation, the Reason is, that God's

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long-suffering, which should lead them to *Repentance* is the Temptation or Occasion of their plunging again into the Vices which he hates. You have tried what there is in Sin, and have repented. You have tried what Repentance is, and have again returned to Sin. Pray consider—Is not this to give Sentence against your Maker, to say that the Devil's *Yoke is light*, and God's an intolerable Burthen? If any thing can shut the Door of Mercy against Us, and render Heaven irreconcilable, it must surely be such an insulting Preference and Provocation as this. Such a Relapse from Duty, like an Apostasy from the Faith, is the Reason, why some Commentators have thought it to deserve the whole Severity of the Apostle's Determination, *it is impossible to renew them to Repentance*. By which they did not mean, that this moral Incapacity of repenting was the Consequence of those Relapses which are occasioned by human Weakness, by Inadvertencies, and Surprizes, but of great, and deliberate, and wilful Sins, that dishonour God, and disgrace the Gospel of Jesus

Jefus Christ. O may it never be the Lot of any of us to know by sad Experience, how far such repeated Guilt and frequent Revolts from a merciful Redeemer will render our Repentance afterwards difficult, and as it were *impossible*!

In a Word; let us learn from the awful Caution in the Text to *fin no more*; let us learn the high Importance of the Apostle's Admonition, 1 Cor. x. 12. *Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.* Be vigilant, and upon your Guard; and let the Ruin of those who perished by renouncing their Repentance, persuade you to be serious in the Business of Religion, and to *work out your Salvation with Fear and Trembling.* Learn to know yourselves, to know your Infirmities and Inclinations, that you may be able to guard and govern them, to know your Danger that you may fly from it, the Temptations that beset, and the Company which infects you, in order to avoid them. And on the other Hand, let not any Man despair. Though he has fallen from his Repentance,

and returned again to his former Sins, let him yet not absolutely despair. His Conversion is difficult indeed, but not quite impossible; or if it be humanly impossible, yet *nothing is impossible with God*. Because it is not impossible, and because it is most indispensably necessary, he ought to undertake it; and because it is difficult, he ought surely to set about it in earnest and immediately.

And may the God of all Mercy visit you with his Salvation! May he bless your Desires of Holiness, and *work in you both to will and to do*! May his Grace enable us all both to know and practice *the Things that belong to our Peace*, that we may be saved from Wrath, and ever live in the Favour of God for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

S E R M O N V.

J O H N viii. 34.

Whoſoever committeth Sin is the Servant of Sin.

THERE would be little Danger of Men's falling into Vice, and committing any groſs Immoralities, would they but conſider and aſſert the Dignity of their Nature. There is implanted in every Man an honeſt Pride in purſuing what is virtuous and right; and till this natural Senſe and Applauſe of conſcious Integrity is ſubdued and ſilenced by Habits of Wickedneſs and Brutality, a Man cannot reflect on his Commiſſion of unjuſt and ſhameful Actions without Bluſhes and Confuſion. It is this Principle in our Nature, that approves what is juſt and decent, and condemns the contrary, that our Saviour applies to in the Text. The Jews to the natural Reſtraints from
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Evil arising from the Turpitude and Baseness of it had superadded a further Check in the Sense of their Descent from *Abraham*, their *Father*, the great Example of religious Obedience, and *the Friend of God*. But inheriting, as it sometimes happens, a great Title without any of the Virtues that produced it, our Saviour tells them the Vanity of Rank unsupported by Merit; that as Nobility without Virtue is but titled Infamy; so if the Posterity of *Abraham* degenerated from his Piety, they lost all Claim to the illustrious Distinction of *Abraham's Children*. *If ye continue in my Word, ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free. They answered him, we be Abraham's Seed, and were never in Bondage to any Man; how sayest thou, ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, whosoever committeth Sin is the Servant of Sin.* As in the great Honours and Titles which the Princes of this World may bestow on the deserving, all that the Possessors of them can transmit is only a splendid Name and a Robe of Honour, which deserves no Value or Admiration where it happens to
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cloath a vile Heart; so the Posterity of faithful *Abraham*, if *they do not the Works of Abraham*, are not to be reputed his genuine Offspring, but rather, as our Saviour severely yet justly adds, *the Children of their Father the Devil*, whose *Lusts* they do. For know ye not, that to whom you yield yourselves Servants to obey, his Servants ye are to whom ye obey? Claim, as you please, the high Distinction of your Birth without superior Virtue, you stand but on the Level of other Men; and though you *make your Boast of God*, and *Abraham*, and are instructed out of *the Law*, yet if through breaking the Law you dishonour God, if you commit Sin, you are *the Servants of Sin*, actual Slaves to it's Yoke, and with all the Ostentation and Pride of Freedom labouring under in reality and doing the Drudgery of the vilest Thralldom.

Let us dwell a little upon this Subject, and consider the Nature of this Slavery, that it is the most scandalous that can be, the most troublesome and unprofitable Bondage; and

and these will be so many Arguments and Reasons why we should avoid it.

i. He that is *the Servant of Sin* is the most infamous of Slaves. He serves an arbitrary cruel Tyrant, and serves him by Choice, whom if he pleased he might command. And what Instance can be produced of a more scandalous Depravity of Reason and Judgment? A surprising Proof no doubt it was thought of the strangest Baseness of Spirit, when a People, to whom the *Romans* offered their Liberty, were so in Love with an arbitrary Government, as to chuse to continue Slaves. Yet is Sin a Tyrant more brutal and base, than the worst that ever insulted and oppressed the most profligate Age of Slaves. The Man, who is unabashed under this sordid Bondage, and can without Blushing reflect on his mean Submission to it, is surely something worse than those Wretches whom the † Historian mentions.

Whilst

† Sed Patres læti, usurpata statim libertate, licentius, ut erga principem novum & absentem; primores, equitem proximi gaudio patrum; pars populi integra, & magnis domibus annexa; clientes libertique damnatorum & exulum, in spem erecti: Plebs fordida & circo ac theatris sueta, simul deterrimi servorum, aut qui adefis bonis, per dedecus Neronis alebantur, mæsti & rumorum avidi. Tacit Hist. Lib. 1. Sect. 4.

Whilst every worthy *Roman* was rejoicing for the Death of *Nero* the bloodiest of Tyrants, these Wretches on the contrary were full of Sorrow. The Scum and Refuse of the People, whom he had entertained with Shews, the vilest of the Slaves, and a Parcel of Rakes that had spent their own Fortunes and were subsisted by the Monster's Vices, —All such grieved for his Death, and wished for another like him. Who is not amazed at, or can forbear to condemn those *Israelites*, who murmured in the Wilderness, and hankered after *the Flesh-pots of Egypt*, who in spite of Miracles were made Unbelievers by their Bellies, and by mere Considerations of Gluttony were induced to prefer a State of Slavery to the Government of God, and to place Freedom in the Bondage of *Egypt*. Of the same infamous Kind, or rather worse, is that voluntary Slavery to wicked Lusts and Passions, which Men impose upon themselves. And though some through long Familiarity with the basest Practices seem to have lost all Sense of their shameful Nature, nay are become profligate enough to boast

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of them; this does not however take off from the Scandal of their Behaviour. Such Wretches as can *glory in their Shame*, like vile Women who have lost the Power of Blushing, shew indeed the Greatness of their Impudence, which the filthiest Actions cannot put out of Countenance. Let them harden their Faces, and let them put on a *Whore's Forehead*, and refuse to be ashamed; they are still Slaves to the meanest and basest of Tyrants. *Whosoever committeth Sin is the Servant of Sin.* They do the Deeds of their Father. They are of their Father the Devil and the Lusts of their Father they will do, obedient to every Impulse of that wicked Spirit, and impotent to resist every Temptation to the most scandalous Vices.

2. The Bondage is as harsh and cruel as it is scandalous. It commands us to sacrifice our Ease and Repose, the Quiet and Tranquility of our Minds, to waste our Health, and dissipate our Fortunes, and sometimes even to sacrifice our Lives. What is it but the Force of this barbarous Thralldom, that
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makes the Drunkard wash away his Health, and *live out but half his Days*, that fills the Goals, and supplies the Gallows, that implants Diseases, and makes Men defraud and oppress one another. This is the just Punishment of those, who prefer the intolerable Tyranny of Sin before *the Service of God*, which is perfect Freedom. *Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with Joyfulness of Heart for the Abundance of all Things, therefore shalt thou serve thine Enemy, the Devil, in Hunger, and in Thirst, and in Nakedness, and in want of all Things : And he shall put a Yoke of Iron upon thy Neck until he have destroyed thee.* (Deut. xxviii. 47, 48.) So it is with those, that have devoted themselves to *follow their own Hearts Lusts*. They live perpetually tormented with the Violence of disorderly Passions. Their true Interest, their Quiet, their Health, and Reputation, Disease of Body, Disorder of Mind, and a decayed Fortune are the Victims, which must be daily offered up to this cruel Idol ; and Conscience, that might and should be the Spring and Treasure of a Man's sincerest Satisfaction, is thereby rendered on

the contrary a never failing Spring of endless Remorse, Anguish, and Confusion.

But 3.—Besides the many certain Vexations, the unavoidable Torments and Dissatisfaction that arise from this shameful and cruel Bondage, he that *is the Servant of Sin* is engaged moreover in an unprofitable Service. That which comforts and supports the Spirits of a Man under the Hardships and Difficulties of Life is the Prospect of a valuable Reward to make Amends for all his Labours. The Mariner, who hazards his Life in tedious Voyages and endures the Inclemencies of various Climates, is encouraged by the Expectation of Gain, which shall indemnify him for all his Toil and Danger. Take away the Hope of this, and he quickly relinquishes a Way of Life, which is attended with the certain Risque of Health, and perpetual Fatigue, and must end at last in Disappointment. Now consider what is the Service of Sin, the most infamous and intolerable Thralldom: See what Prospect it sets before Men, and after all the Trouble and Vexa-

Vexation that it costs, enquire what is the End and *Wages* of it? What, for Instance, does the perfidious Deceiver of his Neighbour, the Man that cheats and circumvents, oppresses and steals, what Advantage does he make? Why if a profitable Bargain, his Reputation must certainly go to the Purchase of it; his Conscience at least must be charged with Guilt; and whilst he is wounded with that, though he possesses Wealth, he will for ever be disabled from enjoying it. What is it that the revengeful Man obtains by serving the Rage of a savage Passion? What, but a tumultuous Agitation of Mind, whilst he is contriving a short Flash of Pleasure in executing his Revenge; but a long, a very long and lasting Horror and Regret of Mind as soon as the Fit of Madness is over, and he comes coolly to reflect on what he has done. Let the Lewd likewise and the Intemperate declare from the Bottom of his Heart, what Gain he has made by these Vices of a Brute. Pleasure no doubt. But does it not cost him much greater Pleasure? Does he not part with all
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the Pleasures of Innocence for the short unsatisfying Pleasures of Guilt, that are soon over and always followed by certain Remorse and bitter Reflections, often by deadly Fevers, and painful Distempers, that greatly overballance the lean abortive Gratification? So that with respect to the present Life, the Service of Sin is really the most unprofitable that can be: And as to the Life which is to come, I tremble to think, how far it is from being profitable; nay, how ruinous in every Regard it is. Shall I say, that *the Wages of it is Death*, the Torments that await it without End, and without Ease, and without Remedy, the Mansion it provides for it's Servants *devouring Flames*, and the Reward of their Services *everlasting Burnings*. And who then can forbear to ask the *Psalmist's* Question. *Have all the Workers of Wickedness no Knowledge*, no right Judgment and Consideration of Things? Will you serve a Master, who pays you with Vexation and Anguish, with Tears and Torments? Will you bear a galling Yoke, the Recompence of
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of which is Death in every View, the Loss of every Comfort, Misery in every Sense of Body and Mind, present and future, temporary and eternal? Misery so vast as well as durable, that it can no more be *conceived by the Heart of Man*, than that infinite Perfection of Joy and Bliss, *which God hath prepared for them that love him*. Go now, and make Gain by Covetousness and Oppression, by Fraud and Falshood, *eat and drink with the Drunken*, and please thyself with the Ruin of abused Women, mind nothing but the Gratification of thy lawless Appetite, and in every way of Injustice and Perfidiousness seek *what thou mayst eat and drink and wherewithal thou mayst be cloathed and pleased*. But remember, that for all thy Industry in Guilt thou shalt have Misery for thy Recompence; *God will bring thee into Judgment*, and thou shalt hear the Sentence of Sin pronounced—*depart ye cursed into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels*.

And surely, if we indeed believe this, as we have all the Reason in the World to do it,

it, and seriously consider these Things, as every Man in his Senses ought, we cannot rest contented in any sinful Course. If we reflect on the Nature, Issue, and Fruit of wicked Practices, that they are attended with many, great, and present Inconveniences, and that *the End of these Things is Death*; this will surely restrain our Passions, and *renew a right Spirit within us*. Who indeed, that thinks at all, will be the Servant of Unrighteousness, when the Wages of it are *Indignation and Wrath*. *Let not Sin therefore reign in your mortal Bodies, that ye should obey it in the Lusts thereof*. Let God rather, who has infinite Right to it, be the constant Object of our Love and Obedience. He, that is the tender and indulgent Father of Mankind, surely deserves all Reverence and filial Duty. He, that *giveth us all Things richly to enjoy*, deserves undoubtedly to be adored, and loved for his unbounded Goodness, and Liberality. God is our Creator, our Governor, and Redeemer of our Souls from Death, and will likewise be our Judge. Let us then acknowledge our Dependance
upon

upon him, and live as those, that are redeemed and must be judged by him, and give all Diligence to walk in all his Commandments blameless. His Service is perfect Freedom, and he is infinitely able and willing to reward all those that diligently seek him. Let us therefore take his easy Yoke and light Burden upon us, and seek those Pleasures which flow from God's Presence for evermore, infinitely before the transient Pleasures of this World, and all the Honours and Advantages of it. Fear therefore God, and keep his Commandments, which are not grievous. Cast off the unfruitful Works of Darknes, and let your Light shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven. Exercise yourselves continually unto Godliness, for that hath the Promise both of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come. Be ye stedfast and unmoveable, be always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know, that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord. I conclude with the affectionate wish of Moses: O that there were such an Heart in you, that you would fear God, and

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keep all his Commandments alway, that it might be well with you, and with your Children for ever. God grant it may be well with us, and may God give us the Grace to do Justice, to love Mercy, to be sober and temperate, and to walk humbly before him for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N VI.

ROMANS ii. 9.

*Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of
Man that doeth Evil.*

AS Happiness is the End, and Aim of our Existence; so are Innocence and Virtue necessary Ingredients in Happiness. Without Virtue there can be no Peace of Mind; and without Peace of Mind there is no Possibility of self Enjoyment, or real Happiness. Glory, Honour and Peace, the inseparable Companions of conscious Integrity, will infallibly support us in any Circumstances: But the Want of this inward Calm and heart-felt Satisfaction no Degree of Affluence or external Prosperity can possibly compensate. A righteous Conduct may be safely trusted. At the worst who would not rather fall by a righteous Conduct, than

owe his Pleasures to Vileness and Iniquity. He who falls by Virtue is in the Peace of his own Mind a Gainer, whatever he loses; as he who gains by Wickedness is a Loser at least as to all domestic Quiet and inward Satisfaction, whatever he gains. All other Evils and Afflictions are tolerable. The worst Distresses of this Life are not beyond all Patience. *The Spirit of a Man* comforted and enlivened with a Sense of Innocence, and the good Hopes of God's Favour arising from it, *will sustain* him under the severest Shocks of Fortune, and sweeten the Calamities of Life. The present Peace of Religion, and the sure Prospect of it's future glorious Reward speak Comfort to the Soul in the Bitterness of Affliction, and enable us to consider all *present Sufferings as not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed.* But as for the ungodly it is not so with him. His gayest Scenes of Pleasure are overcast and darkened by a Cloud upon his Conscience. He is without God, without Comfort, and without Hope; whilst his future Expectation is Wrath, and his Conscience

Conscience in the mean Time recoils, and bears Witness against him, and overwhelms him with Fear, and Shame, and Confusion.

Such is the Office of Conscience, and such is it's Tribunal within us, where it severally performs the Part of Witness, Judge, and Tormentor. And in this Light I shall consider this domestic Judge as producing and inflicting *Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of Man that doeth Evil.*

1.—The first Office of Conscience is to record and witness a Man's Guilt. A Testimony this of ourselves against ourselves, and therefore by no Art to be wholly evaded. This inward Evidence is still strongly reflected upon all *Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men*, and points out the Unreasonableness and fatal Consequence of every Rebellion against it. In vain do Men *seek deep to hide their Counsel.* Though *their Works are in the Dark, and they say, who seeth us, and who knoweth us;* (*Isaiab xxix. 15.*) yet the infinite Eye of Providence is upon them, and

and, what the wise Man calls *the Candle of the Lord*, the Reason and Conscience of every Man declares against his Immoralities. With what unalterable Truth does this faithful Witness testify to the Sinner's Face, urging the grievous Guilt and Baseness of every Crime, and painting to the Imagination it's horrible future Punishment, and the encreasing Nearness of that Day in which he must depart hence, and give Account of himself to God? Can the Man be happy, who feels the Weight and Truth of this inward Testimony, and is convinced by the unanswerable Witness of his own Mind, that he has exchanged his Innocence for guilty Pleasures, and purchased a short Enjoyment at the Price of devouring and endless Flames? The Hour will come when Conscience must think, and then all is Grief and Bitterness. Vain are all the Aids and Arts of Diversion: Nor can any Chain of Amusement, or the most varied Scenes of Mirth entirely exclude, or silence this inward clamorous Witness, which is heard amidst the loudest Laughter, and, like the Hand-writing on the Wall

Wall to *Bellsbazzar*, can turn the jovial Meeting into Heaviness, make the Joints to tremble, and the Sinner's *Knees smite one against another*. Yet

2. Conscience is not merely a Witness but a Judge, and qualified in every Respect to do right, fully informed of the Sinner's Guilt, and acquainted with all it's Circumstances of Aggravation, and from whose Sentence there is no Appeal. And so upright and uncorrupt, so exactly and severely impartial, that no Influence can persuade it to condemn the Innocent, or to acquit the Guilty. Hear a Royal Sinner confessing, how little either Pleasure, Wealth, or Greatness can avail to corrupt, or divert it's impartial Justice. (*1 Maccab. vi. 10. 12.*) *The Sleep, says he, is gone from mine Eyes, and my Heart faileth for very Care. And I thought with myself, into what Tribulation am I come, and how great a Flood of Misery is it, wherein I now am: But now I remember the Evils that I did at Jerusalem, and that I sent to destroy the Inhabitants of Judea without a Cause. I perceive*

perceive therefore, said the wretched King, that for this Cause these Troubles are come upon me, and behold I perish through Grief in a strange Land. Such a just and inexorable Judge is Conscience, implanted in every Man, that inhabits our very Bosoms; and, like the great God from whom it holds its Commission, is about our Bed, and about our Path, and inspects into all our Ways; superior to every Artifice that would elude it's Knowledge, or evade it's Justice. Men in some Cases may be afraid to judge and censure. The great wicked Man may sometimes corrupt the Opinions of his Fellow Creatures, or at least awe them into Silence. But very different is the Behaviour of the intrepid Judge within his own Bosom, who still accosts the Villain by his true Title, and spares not to condemn the Guilty, however sunk in Obscurity and Want, or however raised and supported by high Dignity and powerful Friends. It regards not the Persons of Men, but says to the righteous, that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the Fruit of their Doings; but woe unto the wicked,
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it shall be ill with him, for the Reward of his Hands shall be given him.

This leads me to consider

3. The last Office of Conscience, as it executes it's own Sentence *upon every Soul of Man that doeth Evil*. As it's Witness is full, so is it's Sentence just, and the Scourge of it severe and unavoidable; different however from human Punishments in what it inflicts, as it wounds us inwardly in our Hearts, and lashes the Mind with the most severe and tormenting Reflections. Human Penalties extend only to the Body, and perhaps but to a Part of that, and are often of short Duration. But the Strokes of Conscience afflict the very Soul, lacerate, and vex our Thoughts, torment the whole System of our Minds, and spread Confusion and Horror throughout. Hear the noble Prophet's sublime and pathetic Description of this Disorder and Agony of bleeding Thoughts. *The Lord shall give thee a trembling Heart and Failing of Eyes and Sorrow of Mind. And thy*

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Life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear Day and Night, and have none Assurance of thy Life. In the Morning thou shalt say, would God it were Even: And at Even thou shalt say, would God it were Morning, for the fear of thine Heart wherewith thou shalt fear. (Deut. xxviii. 65, 66, 67.) Nay all this Variety of Distress, and Extremity of Terror, and Dismay may be but the Beginning of Sorrows; all this inward Anguish and incessant Remorse, the first Attacks of that frantic Guilt, and that gnawing Worm, which must for ever prey on the Minds of wicked Men, and inflame the Rage of everlasting Burnings. And yet even in this World the Tempests of Guilt are sometimes so intolerably severe, that the wicked may be compared to *the troubled Sea when it cannot rest*. Nor is there any Thing in this, that was peculiar to the *Jews* on the Desertion of the God that brought them out of the House of Bondage. In various Ages many dismal Instances might be produced, many Examples of the strange Agonies of Guilt, the Burden and Distress of which has been some-

sometimes so exquisitely felt, so very grievous, and intolerable, that some have even professed themselves to envy the Condition of damned Spirits, as thinking the actual Sufferance of the worst Evils of the future World more tolerable than the tormenting Expectation of them, and accordingly have done Violence to their own Lives, and rushed into the future State as to a Place of Refuge from the Flames in their own Bosoms, and chose Damnation itself as something less grievous than the Agonies of a wounded Conscience. Very highly indeed were the wretched Creatures mistaken. For whatever there is of Agony in a Sense of Guilt—these are but the Beginnings of Torment, the distant Scorchings of the ever burning Lake. But let the boldest, and the securest Sinner know, that God is able without ever wounding him either in his Health, or in his Fortunes, but only by unchaining his own Mind, and letting loose his Conscience upon him, so to burn and torment him with a Sense of his Crimes, that he shall live a continual Terror to himself, carry about him

such a Flame of Guilt, such an Hell in his own Bosom, that all the Wine and Riot, all the Honours, and all the Pleasures of the World shall not avail to minister the least Comfort to his heart-sick, and desponding Spirits. Such was the Fate of that great wicked Man *Tiberius*, who confessed the Anguish of his Guilt in a Manner, that shews him agitated and vexed to a Degree of Frenzy: Upon which the judicious † Historian observes how closely the bloody Horror of his Cruelties and Infamy haunted this Man of Blood. “Nor was it without Reason,” continues he, “that the wisest of all Men” (a Compliment which he pays to the celebrated *Plato*,) “was wont to affirm, “that if the Hearts of Tyrants were laid “open, they would be seen full of deadly
“ Wounds

† Adeo facinora atque flagitia sua ipsi quoque in Supplicium verterant. Neque frustra præstantissimus sapientiæ firmare solitus est, si recludantur Tyrannorum mentes, posse aspici laniatus et ictus; quando ut corpora verberibus, ita sævitia, libidine, malis consultis, animus dilaceretur. Quippe Tiberium non fortuna, non solitudines protegebant, quin tormenta pectoris suasque ipse pœnas fateretur.

Tacit. Annal. Lib. 6. Sect. 64

“ Wounds and Gorings; since what Stripes
 “ are to the Body, the same to the Soul is
 “ the bitter Anguish of Cruelty, Lust, and
 “ abominable Practices. To *Tiberius*, not
 “ his imperial Station, not his gloomy and
 “ inaccessible Solitudes could ensure Tran-
 “ quillity, nor exempt him from feeling, and
 “ even confessing the Rack in his Breast, and
 “ the avenging Furies that pursued him.”

See then, Christians, how God hath so
 fashioned the Heart of Man, that a virtuous
 Conduct is necessary to our Peace, and Vice
 cannot be happy in the Company of Rea-
 son. See, what little Wealth can do for
 Man; when not the greatest and most
 hardened Sinner upon Earth with more than
 half the World at his Command could avoid
 declaring himself miserable through Guilt.
 Such was the Force of Conscience in a Hea-
 then, that *knew not God*, and never heard, per-
 haps, of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus. And
 in this strong Instance we discern plainly how
 naturally Guilt and Torment are connected.
 When this wicked Emperor had broken down
 those

those Fences, which God has planted, as a Guard to Virtue, in every Bosom, you see, as *Job* expresses it, (Chapter vi. 4.) that *the Arrows of the Almighty were within him, the Poison whereof drank up his Spirit*, and that *the Terrors of God did set themselves in Array against him*. And how shall Christians escape, who profess themselves Followers of the best Religion in the World—how shall we escape a severer Fate, a more tormenting Conscience in this World, if we do wickedly, and a heavier Doom and Punishment hereafter. And will you yet sin against Conscience, against your Witness, your Judge, your Tormentor? But remember, that *Tribulation and Anguish* are the Legacies of Guilt. Well is it expressed in the second Book of *Esdra*s, (Chapter xvi. 77, 78.) *Woe be unto them that are bound with their Sins, and covered with their Iniquities: Like as a Field is covered over with Busbes, and the Path thereof covered with Thorns, that no Man may travel through. It is left undressed, and is cast into the Fire to be consumed therewith.* Whatever Pleasure, Men may take in the Commission of
of

of any Sin, when that is over, you will find nothing but the bitter Remorses of an avenging Conscience to ensue. The true and durable Pleasures are the Friends of Innocence; nor is any Joy sincere, that is an Enemy to Religion and Virtue. Would you know the whole Truth of these Things?—Go then behind the Scene, and enter the Chamber of Disease. Ask the Sinner what he has gained by a Life of Injustice and Riot—he will tell you, if he has not wholly lost the Power and Use of Reflection,—he will tell you, that his Peace of Mind and his Pleasures are gone for ever, and have left behind them nothing but a wounded Conscience. Ask again, what is the good Man's Support in Distress, what enlivens his Hopes and cheers his Spirit, when he is *walking through the Valley of the Shadow of Death*, he will answer—(it is) *the Testimony of his Conscience*, that he believes in Jesus, and has been *careful to maintain good Works*, and in *Simplicity and Sincerity has had his Conversation in the World*. No doubt, they speak from the Bottom of their Hearts, and declare the
inward

inward Feeling and Conviction of their Mind. And let this teach us to prefer our Duty and a good Conscience to all the World, because it is, in Truth, more valuable than all the World. If we are *Strangers and Pilgrims* embarked in the Christian Profession, and pursuing our Voyage to Heaven, let us not *make Shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience*, without which we can never come to those happy Regions. Let this be the Rule of our Life to consider how Things will appear to us in a dying Hour. And if there is any Thing, in which the best and the worst of Men agree, it is in wishing with one, that judged much better than he acted, the wicked *Balaam*—to *die the Death of the righteous*, and have a *last End like his*.—Would you *die the Death of the righteous*? You must live the Life of the righteous. Live to your Reason. Let Christianity direct your Conscience, and let Conscience watch and guide your Steps. Would we indeed know Peace in this World? Would we enjoy ourselves, and the Quiet of our own Bosoms? Would we have Comfort and
good

good Hopes in our Death, would we after Death see Jesus Christ and behold the Face of God with Joy? Let us lay the Foundation of all this in the Diligence of a good Life—a Life of unspotted Holiness and Temperance in the use of sensual Pleasures, of sincere Piety and Devotion towards God, of strict Justice and Honesty, and of Goodness and Charity towards Men. In all these Relations and Duties let us *keep Innocency, and take heed to the Thing that is right*, which will give us the Comfort of a good Conscience in this Life, and infallibly *bring us Peace at the last*.

God give us all this Peace at last for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

God is with us in this hour of our life.

FROM THE

S E R M O N VII.

MATTHEW. xviii. 7.

Wo unto the World because of Offences : For it must needs be that Offences come : But wo to that Man by whom the Offence cometh.

THE present Life is a State of Trial. And the Influence of bad Examples, with which we live surrounded, is one of those great Trials, wherewith it is the good Pleasure of God to exercise the Faith and Patience of his Servants. There is a Contagion in the Manners and Conversation of profligate Men. Every Day's Experience will supply many and sad Instances of their fatal Infection. And thus it must unavoidably happen. Whilst some Men are wicked and shameless, and others are weak and pliable, governed by Fashion, and apt to wear the Manners of those they converse with ;

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such Occasions of Offence will be too often both given and taken. Yet very highly guilty in the sight of God are all those, who wilfully corrupt the Principles of others, and by evil Actions or rakish Talk debauch the Virtue of the *unstable* and the *unwary*. *Wo to the World because of Offences: For it must needs be that Offences come: But wo to that Man by whom the Offence cometh.*

From which Words I shall take Occasion to consider the flagrant Wickedness of those, who are by any ways instrumental in tempting and betraying others into Guilt: *Wo unto him, by whom the Offence cometh.* And to advance a Step further I shall attempt to shew

2. How much more wicked those are, who pervert the Innocency of others, when they are especially obliged to set them a good Example.

Whoever is the Occasion of others falling into Sin can according to all the Principles
of

of Religion be considered in no other Light, than as the Murderer of their Souls. A Wickedness of a monstrous Nature, the Sin of Devils, directly opposite to the Redemption of Jesus Christ, and for which we shall be called to a most severe Account before the Judgment Seat of God!

It is a Sin of a monstrous shocking Guilt to seduce another from Virtue and Religion; for this is causing a Soul to die, which, had it been upright and innocent, would have lived for ever in the *Inheritance of the Saints in Light*. It is depriving a Man of *Fulness of Joy*, and robbing him of his Title to the Kingdom of Heaven. Let the abandoned and profligate, when he *sits in the Seat of the Scornful*, and is making Disciples for the Devil, consider the dreadful Province, in which he is employed. Wilt thou mangle thy Neighbour in Diversion, *cast Firebrands, Arrows, and Death, and say, thou art in Sport?* This is Barbarity, not Wit, what a Savage only is capable of,—to laugh and make sport with a Man's Ruin, and perform at
once

once the Part of a Merry-Andrew, and a Murderer. Are you sure *there is no God*? Not the wickedest Man breathing can pretend to be certain of this. And is it not likely, that a good and just God must *bate Iniquity*, and love the Thing that is just? And are not all the Hopes, and all the Fears of human Nature inclined to believe and dread a future State? How prodigiously cruel, therefore, even beyond the most shocking Examples of earthly Tormentors, are all those, who industriously propagate Vice and Wickedness, labour to work out their Neighbour's Damnation, and take Pains to make them *tenfold more the Children of Wrath*, than they are naturally inclined to be. Such a Conduct, one would charitably hope, is beyond the Guilt of human Nature, and the Sin of Devils only. That evil Spirit, the Prince of them, was indeed *a Murderer from the Beginning*. Mischief is his Trade, and Destruction his Amusement. His first Exploit was the Fall of our first Parents from their Obedience, and their Expulsion out of Paradise. And his whole Business and Employment

ployment since is represented as one continued Endeavour to make us guilty, in order to make us miserable. But in what does the Libertine and Debauchee differ from these execrable Examples of infernal Malice. Do they not tell you, there is no great Harm in taking a little Pleasure out of the Way;—that Drunkenness, and Whoredom is but following Nature;—that God will not be *extreme to mark what is amiss* in Man, or at the worst, it is Time enough to think of Religion and Virtue, when we are fit for Nothing else, when the *evil Days draw nigh*, and *the Years are come, in which there is no Pleasure*. And what is this but to do the Devil's Work, for which no Doubt but they shall receive his Wages? What is this, but to deceive and to damn the Souls of Men, to take Advantage of their Weakness, to abuse their Simplicity, to banish their Love of Virtue and their Fears of God's Indignation against Wickedness, to carry on the Scheme of Darkness, and to promote the Destruction of their Neighbours with as much infernal Malice, and as they are intimate and familiar
with

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with them, perhaps, with more Effect and Success, than Hell itself could do?

It is likewise a Sin committed in direct Opposition to the Design of our Saviour's Sufferings, and Death. As he came to seek and to save that which was lost; so the Son of Perdition, (and I think that Title well befits the Teacher of Vice and Wickedness,) the Son of Perdition comes with a contrary View, to destroy that which was redeemed. With what pathetic Concern does the Apostle press it upon the *Corinthians* to avoid every Occasion of misleading their Brethren into Guilt; to take heed, lest by any Means they should pervert his good Principles by an indiscreet Use of Things lawful, and so their Liberty should become a Stumbling Block to them that are weak. And the affecting Reason he gives for it is, that the Practice of some Things, which Christianity did not condemn, might embolden the ignorant to do others which were forbidden; and through thy Knowledge shall the weak Brother perish, for whom Christ died? Shall thy superior Understanding, which

which should assist him with good Advice, be exerted to his Ruin, and betray him into Actions, that lead to everlasting Destruction? This surely is the very utmost of Malice and Mischief. What if he had offended thee—What if you hate and abhor him? If you *must* be revenged, rather do him every other kind of Injustice, disturb his Ease and Quiet, blast his good Name, rob him of his Property, nay rob him of his Blood, rather than wound his Virtue, and so poison his Soul. He that can knowingly and deliberately tempt another to those Sins, which God has threatened with his severest Indignation, may surely be ranked with “that †
 “ Monster of diabolical” Wickedness, “ who
 “ frequently boasted, that as different Men
 “ had their different Pleasures and Recrea-
 “ tions; so his peculiar” Amusement “ it
 “ was to *destroy Souls*, and accordingly to
 “ put Men upon such Practices, as he knew
 “ would assuredly effect it.” Or he may vie in Guilt with that *Italian*, that fetched the

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† See South's Sermons Vol. 2. Sermon 5. Page 187.

Method of his Revenge from Hell, if indeed he did not go beyond it, who persuaded his Enemy to “renounce his Religion to save his Life,” and presently spilled his Blood, glorying in the Compleatness of his Revenge “that had destroyed him both Body and Soul.” And will you copy such execrable Patterns, tempt your Brethren to a Debauch, fire their Passions with leud, rakish Talk, lessen their Fear of God, and Love of Goodness, and so plunge them *both Soul and Body* into Perdition? Let the Man, whose Wick-
edness has lifted him under the Devil’s Banner, and whose Missionary he is, let him the next time he is preaching up Vice, and preaching down Virtue and Religion, let him I say, consider a Moment, in what a worthy Service he is engaged, and what a blessed Business he has undertaken;—even to inculcate what is base and abominable, to people devouring Flames, to oppose his Saviour, to do all he can to *crucify him afresh*, and make those Wounds bleed anew, which bled so many Centuries ago to save us from our Sins, and their appointed Consequence, *the*
Worm

Worm that never dies, and the Fire that never shall be quenched.

Some Men, it is to be feared, will yet have their Jest, if it cost their Souls, and ruin the Welfare of their Brethren; and to shew that they can prate, they will even dare to prate against those Principles, which every wise and serious Man acknowledges, and reveres. And *their Tongue is a Fire*, as St. James expresses it, *a World of Iniquity, that defileth the whole Body, full of deadly Poison, which it scatters far and wide, and setteth on fire the course of Nature, and itself is set on fire of Hell.*

But let them be assured, that for this God will bring them into Judgment, and great Reason have all such to expect a severe Trial and a Judgment without Mercy, who have shewed no Mercy to the Weakness of human Nature, but by the Arts of Sophistry, and the Arms of Impudence betrayed Men to Guilt and Death. Hear how awfully God enjoins us to watch over the Welfare of our Brethren, not only to abstain

from all Endeavours to pervert their Innocency, but to be earnest in defending their Virtue, and supporting their Steps in the Way of Duty. *When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not Warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked Way to save his Life; the same wicked Man shall die in his Iniquity; but his Blood will I require at thine Hand.* (Ezech. iii. 18.) Tremendous Reason—to exhort one another daily, whilst it is called to-day, lest any of us should be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin, and perish through our Neglect. But more tremendous Proof, how severely God will punish those, who instead of teaching Men to do well are industrious and diligent to persuade them to *do Evil.* *His Blood will I require at thine Hand.*—But *am I then my Brother's Keeper?* As Cain said to God, when he would excuse a like unnatural Crime. Am I the Guardian of his Virtue, and answerable for his Misbehaviour? Doubtless every Man is, in some Sense, his *Brother's Keeper.* Thy Family, thy Acquaintance, thy Friends are entrusted to thy Care, entitled

titled to thy Advice, subject to thy Admonition and Rebuke. A sacred Talent, which we must improve to the utmost, and return to God with Usury! And if they are ignorant and we instruct them not, if they *make themselves vile and we restrain them not*, if they wander and lose themselves in Vice for want of our Counsel, and are confirmed in evil Habits without our endeavouring by seasonable Reproof to recover them to Religion and Virtue; dreadful will our Condition be, when God shall say, *give an Account of thy Stewardship*. Behold those, who for want of your warning Voice have perished in their Iniquity, whom your bad Examples have seduced from Virtue, whom your vicious Solicitations have debauched into Wickedness, whose Chastity and Modesty your lewd and filthy Discourse has corrupted, whom you have taught to profane the Sabbath, to eat and drink with the Drunken, to forget their Creator, and to trample upon his Commandments. If they are guilty of those Vices, to which the Fire of Hell is threatened, it is owing to your evil Conversation,

and

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and the Poison of your Example. And though your Temptation is no Excuse for them, yet is it an high and grievous Addition to your *own* Guilt. *Go ye cursed,* and join those wicked Spirits, whose Ambassadors, and Agents you have been; *depart into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.*

To conclude this Head. Let us seriously consider, how much it concerns us to guard our Behaviour with respect to others, to *let no corrupt Communication proceed out of our Mouth,* to do no unseemly Action, *but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister Grace unto the Hearers.* He that winneth Souls is wise: And they, that turn many to Righteousness, shall shine as the Stars for ever and ever. Without being Partakers of other Men's Sins we shall have Faults of our own enough to answer for in *the great and terrible Day of the Lord.* And, if the righteous scarcely be saved, there is no hope at all for those who have been the Merchants and Traders of Hell, and labouring throughout

out their Lives to people it's everlasting Flames. *Wherefore laying aside all Filthiness, and what with Regard to the Guilt I would dissuade you from may, with a most emphatical Propriety, be termed Superfluity of Naughtiness, laying aside all this, rather let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and your Reward shall be great in Heaven. Brethren, if any of you do err from the Faith, and one convert him, let him know, that he which converteth the Sinner from the Error of his Way shall save a Soul from Death, and shall hide a Multitude of Sins. May this be our earnest Wish and Endeavour; instead of perverting the Innocence of others, may we rather labour to turn many to Righteousness, that with them we may all inherit the Kingdom of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.
with them we may all inherit the Kingdom
of heaven to how many is righteousness, and
the innocence of others, may we rather
Wish and Endeavour; instead of governing
themselves of sin. May this be our earnest
(not a goal) from Death, and shall bid a
up the sinners from the fear of the Lord, shall
the law, let him know that he shall not
any of you do not from the fear, and one can
more shall be great in heaven. Therefore if
they may for your good Works, and how he
that he your Right to have before him, then
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would convince you that may, with a most
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plain. It is not a law, and it is not
out their lives to people in a Christian

S E R M O N VIII.

MATTHEW XVIII. 7.

We unto the World because of Offences: For it must needs be that Offences come: But wo to that Man by whom the Offence cometh.

A GOOD Example is a Debt, which every Man owes to all the World. *Let every Man please his Neighbour for his Good to Edification*—is the Apostle's Rule of Conduct addressed to all without Exception. The crying Guilt of those, who disobey this Rule, and are instrumental in perverting the good Principles, or corrupting the Morals of others, I have attempted to explain by shewing, that upon the Principles of Religion such a Behaviour is the worst Kind of Murder, the Murder of Souls, that it is a Wickedness of a monstrous Nature, and the Sin of Devils, directly opposing the Blood of Christ, and an Attempt to defeat the

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End of all his Sufferings, for which Men will be called to a most strict and severe Account before the Judgment Seat of God. Yet grievous in general as the Sin is, some peculiar Circumstances there are, which greatly add to it's Guilt, some particular Cases, which make the *Sin exceeding sinful*; namely, where it is committed by those, who are especially obliged to set a good Example.

Though an earnest Concern for the Welfare of others be a Duty incumbent on all, there are yet some particular Engagements, which more urgently demand this Concern, and more severely condemn the Want of it. Thus Parents by the Tie of Nature are more peculiarly bound to promote, and cultivate the Virtue of their Children; and Masters according to the Designations of Providence, which has appointed different Persons to different Stations, and made some subordinate to others — thus Masters likewise from the Superiority of their Rank, are concerned to advance their Servants in religious Knowledge, to conduct and bring
them

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them forwards in the Paths of Virtue and Duty. And the Ministers of God are bound in like Manner to be *Examples to the Flock*, as *St. Peter* expresses it, as well as unsparing Monitors, not only to *shew the People their Transgression, and the House of Jacob their Sins* (II. lviii. 1.) but themselves also to be *sincere, and without Offence, that the Ministry be not blamed*, and lest through their Misconduct Men grow in their Aversion to the Duties of Religion. Those moreover, who are *strong in the Faith*, Christians of enlarged Minds, in whom the *moral Sense* is vigorous, are especially obliged to live among the Weak, those that are unsteady in the Practice of Virtue, or not yet converted from Vice, their Duty is most certainly to behave among such with a stricter Guard upon themselves, with more than common Watchfulness and Caution.— I mention not those of noble, or greatly elevated Rank, as the Case belongs not to *us*. Such Men, as they have great Influence, stand under equally great Obligations. There is a Contagion in their Manners. They too gene-

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rally give a Sanction to whatever they approve and practise. From them the Fashions of Men's Behaviour, like other Fashions, descend downwards through the several Ranks and Gradations of Life. Men copy their Virtues, and adopt even their Follies. They cannot sin alone. Whenever they depart from the Duty of a Man, *thousands fall beside them, and ten thousand at their Right-hand.* These let us leave, however, as leave them we must, *to God, who is no Respector of Persons,* but will render to all according to *their Works,* and let us return to what more immediately concerns ourselves.

If now in Prejudice to the Obligations I have mentioned, the Scandal arises from the very Fountain whence a good Example should proceed, if those, who are more especially concerned to guard and improve the Morals of others, are the first to mislead and deprave them, such are entitled to the Malediction of Christ in the Fulness of it's Extremity. The Wo will be redoubled upon
that

that Man,—because he spreads the Corruption wider and farther, and converts the Remedies of Vice into the Means of it's more extensive Propagation; not only corrupts, but furnishes an Excuse for the Wickedness of others, who say, they are no worse than those that pretend to Virtue, and think it therefore a sufficient Apology, that they are no better.

Now reflect a Moment, and consider impartially, what the Guilt of a Parent is, who to the Dishonour of his Character as a Christian, and to the Reproach of the Name of a Parent which he bears, depraves the Innocency of his Children, and corrupts them by his evil Example. As a Parent, it was his Duty to train them under a serious Knowledge and a strong Sense of Religion. And yet, on the contrary, it is he, who by talking lightly of Religion, by his Indifference about it, by his seldom coming to Church, seldom spending God's Day religiously in the Exercises of Piety, and in seasoning the Minds of his Children with sacred Knowledge,

ledge,—it is he, on the contrary, who by a detestable Habit of prophane Cursing and Swearing, it is he, who teaches his Children to think of God without Reverence, and to look upon Religion not as a Rule of Life and Practice, but a Subject of mere Speculation and Talk. As a Parent, it was his Duty to check the extravagant Sallies of Youth, and bridle the Fury of their Passions. And yet he authorises all the Wildness and Intemperance of youthful Appetite by his own shameful Excesses at a riper and cooler Age, and by Passions more absurd and mad than their's. To the Parent it belongs to form the Manners of his Children, to teach them Self-Government, that Gluttony is the Pleasure of a Beast, and Drunkenness something worse; that Honesty is in truth, what it is commonly said to be, the wisest Policy; and that Indirection and fraudulent Dealing serves only a present Turn, soon runs a Man's Character aground, and there leaves him plunged irrecoverably in the Contempt and Abhorrence of the World;—that Modesty and Chastity are healthful and respected

Virtues,

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Virtues, and that the contrary Vices do implant Diseases, harrow and plague human Life, and are the Inlets to the greatest Part of that Wickedness and Misery which have over-run and tormented the World, Such is the Duty, which every Parent owes to his Children.—But is this Duty discharged? What, if instead of this the Man has by his own loose and scandalous Behaviour lessened and tutored them in Vice! What, if he seems to have planned their Destruction, to have attempted the Ruin of their Innocency, and to sink them as deep as possible in the Dregs and Filth of Lewdness and Dishonesty! Ah Christians! can any of us be guilty of a Conduct so horridly wicked and cruel towards them, whose Welfare in every View, both civil and religious, of Body and Soul, present and future, ought ever to be most dear and valued? When your Children want *Bread, will you give them a Stone? If they ask a Fish, will you for a Fish give them a Serpent,* Poison instead of Food? How barbarous and supremely vile is this? Men are not satisfied to be Libertines themselves, but
make

make their Children by the Education, which they give them, a Race and Succession of Libertines. The Authority of a Parent is exercised to their more effectual Ruin, they breed them after their own Likeness, transmit to them their Vices as a kind of Inheritance, poison them with their Pride and Riot, teach them their dishonest Arts. But tell me, *had it* not been *better* that the Children of such Parents *had never been born*, or were it not less cruel to smother them in their Cradles? Is there an Instance of Brutality, that surpasses such unnatural Examples? What is this but a Father's sacrificing his Children to *Moloch*, or worse? This is something more than is commonly meant by Sin and Wickedness. A Degree of Guilt, and a Strain of Cruelty, that the Languages of Men have not yet invented a Name that is base, black, and detestable enough to call it by!

Very vile likewise, and very flagrant is the Guilt of that Householder and Master of a Family, who not remembering whose Steward

ard he is, and forgetting his Charge, or abusing his Authority, sets a bad Example before his Servants, and estranges them from the Fear of God.—Every evil Pattern is a Species of Poison, and tends to corrupt Men's Minds.—*St. Paul* thought it no extravagant Expression to say, that *if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own House, he hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel.* (1 Tim. v. 8.) It is indeed a most wicked Behaviour for Men to neglect the temporal Welfare of their Families, to idle away their Time, or to waste in Riot and Drunkenness the Gains of their Industry, that are due to the Maintenance of their Household. And if the Sin of *neglecting* a Man's Family be so great, what is the Crime of those, who are diligent to ruin them? If *St. Paul* expresses himself so severely of Masters that are idle,—what would he have said of others that are wicked? And if the bare Neglect, or the bare Forgetfulness of what a Master, as a Christian, owes to those of his own House, be charged by the Apostle as an Apostacy from the Faith;—what

Name, what Brand of Infamy would he have fixed on that Man, who far from watching over them, or taking Pains to ensure their Salvation, which, as a Man, he ought earnestly to wish, which, as a Christian, he ought sedulously to promote, and for which, as their Master, he is accountable to God, is, on the contrary, the Cause, the unnatural Cause of their growing wicked, and Despisers of God, and becomes the Instrument of their Reprobation. *But wo to that Man*---He is not only without Pardon, but without Excuse. His own Conscience, one Day, will never cease tormenting him for it, and the Profelytes of his Guilt will everlastingly vex and wound his Thoughts, when they follow him in his Punishment, as they followed him in his Vices, and are cast into the same burning Lake to be his inseparable Companions in that *Place of Torments*.

But farther, what must we say, or what can we think of those, who being Embassadors in Christ's Stead seem to have forgotten their Duty, are visibly *Partakers* of

other

other Men's Sins; though they cry aloud against them, and whilst they are beseeching Men to be reconciled to God, set an Example of those Vices, to which God's extreme Indignation is threatened. To be silent on this Subject would look like Dissimulation; and yet to enlarge upon it is in Truth a bitter Task. Hard is it indeed and grievous to reproach ourselves. And yet we are but Men, too often both frail and sinful Men, of like Passions with ourselves, subject to the same Infirmities, beset with the same Temptations, liable to Sin, and sometimes, let the mortifying Truth be owned, sometimes grossly lapsing into Sin. If I must speak therefore on this disagreeable Subject, let me speak of it however in a Way that may instruct and not confound you. Far am I from being insensible, what Impression such Examples make, and that our bad Conduct, or Men's worse Reasonings and Inferences from it throw a stumbling Block in the Way of our Salvation. Very guilty, no Doubt, is such a Conduct in such a Character, and of how much sorer Punishment, suppose ye

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shall such be thought worthy? If the Wickedness of such Men be great, ---- (alas, very great, no Doubt it is!) yet great also is the Guilt of those who tread in their Steps, and follow their bad Example. Though God will require your Blood at our Hands, if we mislead you by our ill Conduct; yet shall you die in your Iniquity nevertheless. For there is a Wo unto them that take Offence, as well as to those that give Offence. And our blessed Saviour, who foresaw every Difficulty in your Way, and has provided for all possible Cases of Trial, has furnished you with Weapons sufficient to enable you to combat and conquer even this worst of Temptations, and to leave you inexcusable if you do not. He has foretold and admonished you beforehand, that such Offences will come. And he has moreover pointed out the Rule of Life you are to follow, when those, who sit in *Master's* Seat, are not perfect in their Lives. In this Case you are commanded to regard the Purity of their Doctrines, not the Corruption of their Morals, and are told, that you

are to follow them no farther, than they themselves are the Followers of *Jefus Chrift*, that you are to hear, but not to imitate them, to obey their Instructions, but not to do after their Works, when they *say*, and *do* not.

And laftly, as to thofe Chriftians, who know and are convinced of their Duty, and pretend much to Religion, they likewise are greatly blameable and guilty, when by their Mifconduct they give Occafion to Men, that feek Occafion, to palliate their Vices, and to reproach and blaspheme Religion in general. The Reason why Chriftianity is fo little revered by fome is, becaufe many, who pretend to a great deal of it in their Converfation, fhew very little of it in their Lives. Were Chriftians as fincere and exemplary in Virtue and Goodnefs, as their facred Profeflion requires, thofe that deem lightly of our Holy Faith would be perfuaded to think better of it, or at leaft they would have as little to object to us as they have to approve in themfelves. What confirms

firms them in their Wickedness is the strange Contradiction they observe between the Belief and the Behaviour of Christians. *Wherefore should they say, where is now their God? What avails their Profession and their Faith?* The World however profligate expects it from those that pretend to Religion, that they *be blameless and harmless*, that their Life be above Reproach, and there be nothing in their Conduct that belies their Profession. And if their Actions are not answerable to this Expectation, if they live like other Men, and are stained with the same Vices, if their Devotions are mingled with scandalous Passion, with Revenge, though perhaps treble refined, or the Intemperance of the Tongue, if a Man that pretends to Conscience is covetous, is unjust, is given to Evil-Speaking, fond of Scandal, and indefatigable in propagating it, is shuffling and insincere ;---- what a Triumph is this to the Men of Wickedness, which they will not fail to interpret as a kind of Licence and Warrant for their Vices. The World, it is
true,

true, very often condemns good Men very undeservedly. And, for God's Sake, let this teach us all to be more exactly and severely watchful over our Conduct, *to be the Sons of God without Rebuke in the Midst of a crooked and perverse Nation*, (Phil. ii. 15.) *that the Name of God and of his Doctrine be not blasphemed, and his true Religion vilified and slandered through us. Let our Conversation be such as becometh the Gospel of Jesus Christ; let us walk, as it directs us, in all Godliness and Honesty, and let us influence others, as far as we are able, to live as we do, adorning the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all Things, having our Conversation honest among the Gentiles (and those that live like Gentiles, or worse, Men who call themselves Christians, whilst their God is their Belly, and they glory in their Shame,) that whereas they speak against us as evil Doers, and from our Vices take Occasion to justify their own, they may, on the contrary, by our good Works, and more religious future Conduct, which they shall behold, glorify God in the Day of Visitation.*

And

And may God of his infinite Mercy
 give both us and them the Grace to do so
 for the Sake of his beloved Son Jesus Christ
 our Lord.

S E R M O N IX.

I SAMUEL iii. 13.

I have told him, that I will judge his House for ever, for the Iniquity which he knoweth: because his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

THE Words relate to the Punishment of *Eli* and his House, and the unhappy Causes of it; and afford Matter for very serious and useful Reflection. Very grievous was the Vengeance inflicted, very black and very provoking was the Guilt of *Eli's* Sons. Though standing in a more immediate Relation to the God of their Fathers, and obliged therefore to a more ardent Zeal to promote and spread the Honour of his Name; yet instead of supporting a Sense of Religion, through their wicked Behaviour it came to pass, that

Men abhorred the Offering of the Lord: (Ch. ii. 17.) Instead of being Examples of a blameless Conduct, they even seduced the Virtue of others, and were themselves the Tempers that *made the Lord's People to transgress*. What could be more flagitious than a Behaviour like this? What Vengeance too severe for a Guilt so vile and inexcusable? But for *Eli* — Some, perhaps, may deem his Case an hard one. He was far from approving the Villainy of his Children. He blamed — he expostulated the Wickedness of their Behaviour. But Reproof without Correction and Restraint is no sufficient Check to the daring Viciousness of some Tempers. And the Forbearance of this it was, that so highly inflamed his Guilt. — His Children *made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.* — And this drew upon him the full Execution of that severe Menace from God, that is recorded in the preceding Chapter. *The Lord God of Israel said indeed, that thy House, and the House of thy Father, should walk before me for ever. But behold the Days come, that I will cut off thine Arm, and*
the

S E R M O N IX. 131

the Arm of thy Father's House, that there shall not be an old Man in thine House for ever. And the Man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine Altar, shall be to consume thine Eyes, and to grieve thine Heart. And this shall be a Sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two Sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one Day they shall die both of them.

Conceive, if you can, a Calamity more afflictive than this. Some of your Children torn away from you by a violent Death, and hurried in a Moment into that Place, into which the *Wicked* are turned and all the *People that forget God*; and those whom divine Vengeance spares left to punish you by an unnatural Behaviour, *to consume thine Eyes, and to grieve thine Heart.*---Hard Case of unhappy Parents, some may fancy; if a tender Heart, if a milky Gentleness of Nature, if a fond Indulgence to the Follies of tenderly beloved Children, if so natural a Weakness be attended with so great a Guilt; ---alas then for those, who think they can-

not but feel these Partialities for the Misconduct of their Children !

So many are interested in this Example of *Eli*, such fatal Consequences both to the Parents and to the Children we see entailed upon it ;---that it may surely warrant our farther serious Examination of this very important Subject.---Let us enquire therefore, what is the Guilt of Parents that neglect the Education of their Children. And if the *Sin be so exceeding sinful*, it will deserve a serious Attention and most earnest Endeavours to avoid it.

1.---To neglect the *Education* of your Children is an Act of great Ingratitude to God for the many wonderful Mercies he has shewn in preserving them. You know in what helpless Circumstances they come into this World. Scarcely can they well be said to be alive, but like the Idols of which the Prophet speaks---*having Eyes they see not, having*

having Ears they hear not, having Feet they walk not, without Foresight of Evil, without Power of averting, or sustaining it. And they would perish by innumerable Accidents, if the kind Hand of Providence did not wonderfully preserve and deliver them.

The Words of the Psalmist on this Subject are indeed the real Voice of Nature.

Thou art he, says David, that seekest me out of my Mother's Womb; through thee have I been bolden up ever since I was born. Now God's

benevolent Care of our Children is certainly an earnest Call upon us to do our Part likewise, to teach them what they owe to their Maker, to him that was their Hope and Support when they *hanged yet upon their Mother's Breasts*, and awfully reminds us to take Heed, that we *despise not one of these little Ones*, that we spare no Pains to make them good and virtuous, since, as our Lord assures us, *in Heaven their Angels do always behold the Face of our Father which is in Heaven*, (Matth. xviii. 10.) ready to take Notice of every Neglect of them, and to be Wit-

nesses

nesses in the Day of Judgment against our unnatural Behaviour to them.— But,

2.—To neglect the Education of our Children, is to suffer those Seeds of Corruption, which they derive from us, to grow and spread to the Ruin of their Happiness. Did the Scriptures say nothing of Man's lost Innocence, and his fallen degenerate State, we could not without Stupidity but observe daily the fatal Fruits of it. Scarcely do little Children discover any Symptoms of Reason, but at the same Time the Symptoms appear of a Malignity that lurks within. We perceive this evil Nature grow and expand itself, as the Faculties of their Minds are opened and unfolded. A lamentable Case undoubtedly! that calls for the softest Compassion and the warmest Concern to heal and relieve it, so far as our own Diligence may, and to prevent the fatal Consequences it may end in; which if Parents cruelly neglect to do, the Life they have given to their Children is not a Blessing but a Curse.

You

You were the Instruments of bringing them, naked and helpless, into a wicked World.--- You taught them no Lessons of Virtue, nor did you check their Proneness to Evil. You turned them out ignorant and undisciplined, liable to mistake and go astray at every Turn and fall a Prey to every Temptation. Miserable is the State of such forlorn Children, and their Parents are the unnatural Abettors of it.--- We read of many Nations among the Ancients, that made a Practice of exposing their Children, leaving them to perish by Hunger, or the Jaws of wild Beasts. And shocking as this Custom seems to a gentle humane Heart, it was Mercy compared with the Conduct of those, who believe that *the Wicked shall be turned into Hell*, and yet leave their Children uneducated, and exposed to those Temptations, which will in every fair Probability precipitate them into this never ending Destruction.---- And therefore

3,---To

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3,---To

3.--- To neglect the Education of our Children is to fail in that Tenderneſs, to which they have a natural Claim. What elſe can you do for them? What other Proviſion for their Happineſs---What other Inheritance can you bequeath? Titles?--- And had you Titles--- without Virtue, without Goodneſs, theſe are but idle Sounds, deſtitute of all Senſe and Truth? Riches? *Alas they often make to themſelves Wings and fly away;* and if Riches endure, *they profit not in the Day of Wrath.* Honours? And had you Honours to leave them, there is often a Bitterneſs mingled with theſe, a Bitterneſs ſpringing from Abufe, that ſpoils the Taſte of them. The beſt Inheritance, the moſt durable, the happieſt Legacy, that you can leave them, is a virtuous Education, a ſincere Piety, and a ſerious Fear of God.

Ponder a Moment the unhappy Caſe of Children,---- born into a World that is it-
ſelf

self a Snare to Virtue, destitute of religious Knowledge which they are not likely to obtain without your teaching, exposed to Temptations that will certainly subdue them, if you do not guard their infant Years, and *bring them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord.* Your Children, your helpless Children, are justly the Objects of your benevolent Wishes, that claim a Share, a large and tender Share, of your Concern, whom the Laws of the Gospel, as well as the Laws of Nature, oblige you to shield from all Harm, and to bless with every Help and Comfort in your Power. Do but seriously think over their very compassionate Case; ignorant of God, ignorant of *the Lord that hath bought them*, ignorant of themselves, and uninstructed, that in this Life their truest Joys, their best Interests cannot be found; not knowing, that their Stay in this World is short, their Passage into another certain, and that all must there *receive according to the Things done in the Body*, everlasting Bliss, or Sorrows that shall know no End;----alas, does not their Case importunately

nately call for Help? Can we be blameless, and see the dear Creatures *perish, for whom Christ died*, without one earnest Endeavour for their Salvation? They know but little yet of him, by whose blessed Name they are called. Without Education, they must go on still in Darkness, and grow up under the Tyranny of their Passions, must be lost for want of Knowledge, and for ever perish from the right Way. And do not these sad Circumstances speak plainly, and cry aloud for Pity? The Love of our Children, which even the worst of Men cannot but feel, Compassion for their helpless Case, the Fear of God which commands us this Duty, Regard to the Name of Christ, by which both they and we are called, do with one Voice exhort and provoke us to Diligence in this Labour so important to their Welfare, in which their present and future Happiness, in which the Glory of God, and the Honour of the Gospel are so much and so nearly concerned.

What

What is there so deserving a good Man's Concern in the last Extremity of Nature, when the near Approach of the next World hath warned him to call off his Thoughts from this, what is there that can so justify his looking back, as the State in which he is about to leave his Children. And certainly there is nothing that will speak Peace to your Heart on this tender Subject so effectually, as the Testimony of your Conscience that you have not neglected their religious Education. If you can say with our blessed Saviour, *I have manifested thy Name unto them which thou gavest me out of the World ; I have given unto them the Words which thou gavest me and they have received them ;* you have surely no Reason to doubt, when their Father and their Mother are summoned to leave them, that *the Lord will take them up.* They are safe in the Hand of an Almighty Father, whose Love to his Children is infinitely beyond the Love of all earthly Parents. *God will never leave them nor forsake them,---- His Faithfulness and*

Truth shall be their Shield and Buckler ; his Mercy and his Goodness their exceeding great Reward for evermore.

4.— Consider, that to neglect the Education of your Children will furnish them with Arms against yourselves, and they will live, after the Manner of *El's* Sons, to *consume your Eyes, and to grieve your Hearts.* The most undutiful Children are those, who have been corrupted with this cruel Connivance at their childish Vices. Our false Tendernefs, our weak Indulgence ruins them. *If you have neglected your Duty, can you complain that they have forgotten theirs? If Parents have nothing to teach, what have Children to obey?*

But consider the Consequences of a neglected Education in a still more awful Light, as regarding our future Existence in an everlasting Life after Death. *If your Children make themselves vile, and you restrain them not, there is a State of Misery prepared*

pared for this grievous Guilt, the single Apprehension of which cannot fail to influence a sensible Heart. To cause *one of these little Ones to offend*, or even to suffer them to offend; to seduce, or allow them by a wicked Negligence and very criminal Connivance to be seduced from the Ways of God and Virtue into Sin and Perdition; whatever painful Ideas may spring from a Conduct so horribly wrong and unnatural, all these will be sure to rise against us, will vex and wound our Minds with an Agony of bitter Reflections.

Imagine the Father of a Family, when he comes into those Regions of Sorrow, that are the appointed Mansion of all *that know not God*;----imagine a Father discerning among reprobated Spirits a Child of his own, brought through his Neglect into that Place of Torments; with what Anguish will he hear those Reproaches, which his unnatural Cruelty must justly provoke against him? Barbarous Parent, whom a brutal Appetite,

or

or mere worldly Considerations prompted to give me a miserable Being, see, cruel Man, to what an Extremity of Despair you have wickedly reduced me ! Look on these eternal Chains, whose *Iron enters into my Soul*, look on these enclosing Flames, whose Torment consumes me ;---- these are the fatal Consequences of my neglected Education ! Was it not enough to produce me a sinful Creature without adding Guilt to Pollution, and making me *tenfold more the Child of Wrath, than I was by Nature ? Why did I not die in the Womb ? Why did I not give up the Ghost the Moment I was born ?* (Job iii. 11.) *Wherefore is Light given to him that is in Misery, and Life unto the bitter in Soul ?* (v. 20.). *I long for Death but it cometh not.* O shew me *the Mountains to fall on me, and the Hills to cover me from the Wrath of God.*----Or if the Vengeance that pursues thee hath forbidden this, I must, alas, myself become thy Tormentor ; eternally must you see the Spectacle of my Miseries ; eternally must you hear the Deep Resound with my

my continual Cries, and be a Witness of my incessant Wailings, and Despair !

If the Thoughts of such a future Meeting with your neglected Children throw a Gloom upon your Spirits, and make your Heart sink within you ; turn your Reflections to Objects more suitable to Beings such as we are, who were certainly designed for Happiness, however we may through our own Misbehaviour fail to obtain it.

To deny your Children the Blessing of a good Education is to deny yourself in the next World Joys, which exceed our Imagination, as much as they surpass the Power of Language to describe them.

Think, when you shall hear the last Trumpet sound, and *the Voice of the Arch-Angel* shall bid the *Dead arise*, think with what Rapture we shall again behold *the Children which God hath given us* ; with what Transports of Joy we shall meet again the
 dear

dear Objects of parental Love, which Death perhaps snatched away untimely, and whose Loss hath cost us so many Sighs and Tears. Think, what Joy *unspeakable* must glow in the Christian's Bosom, to stand at the Head of a virtuous Family, to come with this happy Train before the Throne of Jesus, and appear blameless in his Sight; to be able to say, *behold me and the Children which thou hast given me:---Those which thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost.*

Can you pause on such Reflections as these, and not seriously resolve to *train up your Children in the Way that they should go?* Let us consider, how plainly God enjoins, how earnestly the Voice of Nature urges, and presses upon our Hearts, the extreme Obligation of this very important Duty; that those Parents, who rob their Children of this necessary Instruction, which is entailed upon them by the Law of God, and by the Ties of Nature, and of which they cannot be disinherited without the greatest Injury

Injury to their Souls, that such Parents will be responsible for those Sins of their Children, which they commit for Want of such Instruction. Every Parent hath in effect said unto God as *Judab* said unto his Father; — *I will be Surety for the Children, of my Hand shalt thou require them; if I bring them not unto thee, and set them before thee, then let me bear the Blame for ever.* And can a Parent then fulfil this Obligation, must he not displease his heavenly Father, and *bear the Blame for ever*, unless he trains them up to Virtue, shews them the Path of Life, and sees that no *Mischief befall them by the Way*? Let this be our Care: Let us give unto them the Words which God hath given unto us.----And may God bless our Diligence in teaching them. May the Seed which *hath* been sown, and the Seed which *shall* be sown, *take Root downward, and bring forth abundant Fruit upward*, and may the End be everlasting Life, even *an Inheritance among them which are sanctified*, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

S E R M O N X.

I THESS. i. 9, 10.

They themselves shew of us, what Manner of entering in we had unto you, and how you turned to God from Idols, to serve the living and true God,---And to wait for his Son from Heaven, whom he raised from the Dead, even Jesus which delivered us from the Wrath to come.

NOTHING represents Christianity to greater Advantage, no Argument is so likely to promote the Love and Practice of it in the World, as the good Lives of it's Professors, and Followers. The Apostle was very sensible of this ; and with much real Joy and Exultation of Heart surveys the Success of his Labours, that he had *neither preached in vain, nor the Thessalonians believed in vain.* To them he appeals

as living Evidences in Favour of the Gospel, and Examples to all that believed in *Macedonia* and *Achaia*. Their *Work of Faith*, and *Labour of Love*, and *Patience of Hope* in the Lord *Jesus Christ*, were illustrious Attestations both of the Apostle's Diligence, and of the good and virtuous Hearts of the *Thessalonians*. No Prejudices of Education, no Force of Custom, no Habits of Religion, which put the strongest Bias upon the Mind, and are the hardest to change, because Men think it an Impiety to change them, no Allurements of a Religion the most flattering to Flesh and Blood, that indulged the natural Corruption of the human Heart, and made Vice and Devotion consistent, could hold them in Chains ; but through all this Opposition and Reluctance of the worst of Habits did the ingenuous Minds of the *Thessalonians* force their Way to turn to the living God, and *Jesus* which delivers from the Wrath to come.

Such

Such was the Conversion of the *Thes-
salonians* to the Gospel of Christ ; not barely
a Profession of Faith in Jesus, whilst in
Works they denied him, and persevered in
those Vices which blackened the whole Face
of the Gentile World. No, they left their
Idols to serve the living and true God ; to
serve him in the Manner, which that infi-
nitely pure Being commands, in *Holiness and
Righteousness*. And such, likewise, must the
Conversion of Christians be --- as sincere
and entire from every Thing that is con-
trary to the Religion of their Master, and as
active and alive in *adorning the Doctrine of
God our Saviour in all Things*.

To this it shall be the Business of this
Discourse to exhort you ; namely,

1.---*To turn from Idols to serve the living
and true God.* And

2.---*To*

2.-----*To wait for his Son from Heaven, as one whom God hath raised from the Dead to deliver us from the Wrath to come.*

Before the Publication of the Gospel the State of Religion was deplorably corrupt. Men left to their own Reason shewed, how unsteady and uncertain a Guide mere Reason is ; when under it's Direction the Knowledge and Belief of the one true God was universally lost, false Gods, the Patrons and Encouragers of Vice, took Place, and Men became wicked upon Principle. It was a melancholy Scene ! Superstition, the vilest and most unmanly, prevailed, and gave Birth universally to the vilest and most unmanly Practices.

How sincerely, how entirely the *Thessalonians* abandoned this State of Darknes and Corruption we see in the Words before us. An Example of Zeal for the Truth of God, and of Minds honestly disposed to follow
wherever

S E R M O N IX. 151

wherever the Light of the Gospel should lead them, well worthy of our sober Reflection and diligent Imitation; when neither the unhappy Force of an early Education, nor the strong Prejudices which every Man has to the Religion in which he has been bred, nor a Veneration for their Ancestors who had lived and died in the same Religion, nor the Authority of their Priests, nor the Example of the World, that was wholly given to Idolatry, could divert them from following the *Truth as it is in Jesus*, nor prevent *their turning from Idols, to serve the living and true God!*---- In this it may be thought, that Christians cannot imitate their unprejudiced Regard to the Truth of the Gospel, and their Resolution to abandon a false Religion for the Sake of *the good Word of God*. Education hath happily given you the Knowledge of the *one true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*. Christianity is the Religion of your earliest Years: Into this Faith were you baptised; in this were you trained from your Youth up, *to renounce*
the

the Devil and all his Works, to believe in God, and to serve him; looking for the Resurrection from the Dead, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Can you then turn from Idols to serve the living and true God, who never knew what it was to worship Idols? Happy are the People that are in such a Case, who have invariably adhered to the pure Religion of Jesus, and have always lived, as if the Lord was their God. But is this really the Case? Did you never then forsake the Religion of your Education? Did you never worship Power, never worship Pleasure, never worship Wealth? Have you never feared them that kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do; have you not feared them more than you fear him, who after he hath killed, hath Power to destroy both Soul and Body in Hell? Have you trusted in the Lord with all your Heart, and at all Times? Did you never trust in Man, nor make Flesh your Arm, and in your Heart depart from the Lord? (Jer. xvii. 5.) Have you loved him, as you are commanded, with all your Heart, with

with all your Soul, and with all your Strength? Nay, have you not *loved this present World,* sought *what you might eat and drink, and wherewithal you might be cloathed,* the Pleasures and Splendors of Life more than the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness? He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him, must trust in his Promises, and perform the Conditions of them. Without this you cannot *turn to serve the living and true God: Without Faith in him it is impossible to please him.*----And if he be your God, *where is his Fear?* If he be your Father, *where is his Honour?* (Mal. i. 6.) These are the natural Expressions of Reverence, the genuine Language of sincere Adoration. But what Honour, what Fear of God have those who blaspheme his Name, who trample on his Commandments, who *hold the Truth in Unrighteousness,* who *say they believe in God, whilst in Works they deny him.* Those therefore that *know God, and yet glorify him not as God,* have certainly no true Vital of Religion.

gion. Their Lives are an actual Renunciation of their Faith, an absurd and impracticable Attempt of reconciling Religion with *foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition.* The Scriptures decide, that *no Man can serve two Masters,* where their Interests are contrary, and their Demands opposite. *Either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.* To reconcile them is impossible. You cannot devote yourselves to the World, and live the Life of Faith. You cannot at once *set your Affection on Things above, and Things on the Earth.* *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.*

As too many, who *name the Name of Christ,* are Strangers to the Spirit of his Religion, and live in a Manner that is unworthy of the Gospel---let me then recal to your Thoughts the Example which *St. Paul* sets before us in the glorious Behaviour of the *Thessalonians.* Reflect on the Difficulties they had to struggle with, and the Temptations

tations they surmounted, when they left their *Idols to serve the living God*. Is there a Pleasure, or an Interest in this World, that opposes your Reformation and Christian Progress, which was not more strongly opposed to them? Are you weak and impotent to Good? So were they. Have you strong Passions to *mislead* you, long Habits of Wickedness to conquer? They had all this and more; not only were *Men of like Passions* with yourselves, open to the Temptations and Terrors of the same evil World, governed by the same *fleshly Lusts*, and deeply sunk in Habits of the grossest Wickedness, but comforted and encouraged to persist in them by a Religion that was the Friend of Corruption, whose very Gods were vicious, and whose Followers could not condemn in themselves, what they approved in the Deities they worshipped. Can it now be harder for us, than it was for them to *turn from Idols*? They, as the Apostle tells us, *became obedient to the Faith, and received the Word, in much Affliction, with Joy of the Holy Ghost*. And remember, that the same

God that called them to Repentance, the same *living and true God* still calls upon us, the same Jesus commands us to *fly from the Wrath to come*; the same zealous Apostle, *tho' dead, yet speaketh*, and beseeches us not to receive the Grace of God in vain.----May we not frustrate by our Neglect the merciful Calls of Heaven.----May we receive the Word, as the *Thessalonians* did, not as the *Word of Men*, but as it is in Truth the *Word of God*, and

2.----Wait for the Son of God from Heaven, even Jesus who *delivers us from the Wrath to come*.

It was not sufficient for the *Thessalonians*, you see, merely to renounce the Worship of Idols, and to *serve the living and true God*. Were this all, were you only to stand on the Foundation of natural Religion, worshipping the true God, but Strangers to the Hope that is in Jesus, by which we have Peace with God, even the Forgiveness of Sins, a serious *Jew*, or a virtuous *Mahometan*,

tan, would stand in the same Rank of Praise. But we must moreover believe in him who hath purchased us with his Blood: We must *wait for him from Heaven*, as the Person, who alone can redeem us, and *deliver us from the Wrath to come*; that Wrath so dreadfully described and so terribly to be executed, *when the Lord Jesus shall descend from Heaven with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power.* (2 Theff. i. 7.)

Such is the Salvation we are to wait for. *By Grace are ye saved through Faith.* But much it imports us to remember always, what the Faith of the Gospel is--- not a dead, inoperative Principle, that floats in the Brain, a speculative Knowledge of God's Mercy through Christ, or a cold unactive Assent to this Scheme of Redemption; but such a Faith in Christ as dwells in the Heart with
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the Warmth of Life Blood, that is the Life of our Life, and the Soul of our Actions, that animates our Thoughts, governs our Conduct, and *guides our Feet in the Ways of Peace.* Some unhappily deluded Christians would make *believing* the whole Business of a Christian. It is indeed, as a judicious † Writer observes, “ an easy Way of Salvation, if no more be required to Man’s Happiness, but a Fancy and strong Opinion, which they will easily call *believing*. Such as make no other Condition of the Gospel but believing, and will hardly allow that to be called a Condition, ought to have great Care to keep their Hearts sounder than their Heads; for their only Security will lie in this, that they are good, though they see no real Necessity of being so.” To *wait for the Lord from Heaven* implies indeed a real, and lively Expectation of his coming again, a full and deep Persuasion on our Hearts that the Day is fixt, and the Hour certain; and that the Event of it to every Man will be an Allotment

† Bishop Stillingfleet, Vol. I. p. 56, 57.

ment to eternal Pleasures, or a Condemnation to never-ending Miseries. Such is the Christian Faith :----A Faith which has affecting Influences---- that fills the Heart with Love and takes Possession of our Affections, that is Gratitude for God's Benefits, Trust in his Goodness, Devotion to his Service, is Hope in his Mercy, and Faith in his Promises, Resignation to his Providence, and entire Obedience to Christ's Commandments : And the Want of this Faith it is, that makes up the great Reproach of Christians. " Hear the verbal " Protestations of all Men," says the insolent † Adversary of Christianity," " nothing they are so certain of as their religious Tenets : Examine their Lives, you " will scarcely think they repose the smallest " Confidence in them." Can this be said with Truth, and can Christians be innocent? Is the Name of God blasphemed through you, is the Gospel disparaged, and it's blessed Author vilified on your Account,

count, and are you not horribly guilty? We are Christians: But what is there of Christianity in our Lives? But we *believe*, and therefore we are Christians. Yet *all* that believe are not Christians; *the Devils also believe, and tremble.* To be a Christian is not merely to be called by our Saviour's Name, to pay him an exterior Service, to frequent his Church, to *receive the Cup of Salvation*, to talk of, to dispute and grow warm for the Honour of our holy Religion. It is moreover to *receive with Meekness the ingrafted Word, which is able to save your Souls*, and to *be Doers of the Word, and not Hearers*, or Talkers only, to *believe in Jesus*, and to *walk in all the Commandments of the Lord blameless.* And when this is neglected and forgotten, if Men abandon themselves to the Love of the present World, to the Lust of Money, to Ambition, to Fraud, and Insincerity, if they are envious, revengeful, proud and intemperate, the Slaves of filthy Lusts, they may *call themselves Christians*; but if such Men are Christians, then
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he may be a Christian, who is *alienated from the Life of Christ, whose God is his Belly, and whose Glory is in his Shame*, a Christian in Name, but in Behaviour and in Life surely a Disgrace to human Nature. And what a Dishonour is this to the sacred Name by which they are called, and where must their Portion be at last? Will not the *Servant who knows*, and yet disobey his Lord's Will, suffer, as he deserves, the severest Infliction? Shall they not have Judgment without Mercy, who despise the Riches of God's Mercy and Forbearance, and are evil, because God is good.

Let this Saying, then, sink down into your Hearts, and have it's due Effect upon your Lives and Conversations ---- that the Faith of a Christian and his *waiting for the Lord from Heaven* is no idle, notional Matter only. No: It is such a Belief as is *quick and powerful*; such a Persuasion as is constantly present to our Minds, and by being so, works itself into the very Temper and Disposition of our Souls, governs our

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Thoughts, and will discover itself on all proper Occasions in our *Words* and *Actions* also.---This, and this only, is that *Faith which overcometh the World*. Thus do true Christians *wait* for their *Lord from Heaven*.---And the Day will certainly come, when he *shall descend* from thence, to be glorified in his Saints, and to be admired of all them that wait for him, but to the eternal Confusion of all that have despised him: A Day of Deliverance and Triumph to them, *who by patient Continuance in well-doing seek for Glory, and Immortality*; but to Unbelievers and the Impenitent of infinite Terror and Despair. *We know not indeed at what Hour the Master of the House will come, whether at Even, or at Midnight, or at the Cock-crowing, or in the Morning*. But this we know, that *blessed are those Servants whom their Lord when he cometh shall find watching*. (Luk. xii. 37.) May this support our *Sleeps*, and animate our *Spirits*, while we walk in the Path of his *Commandments*. For this blessed Day *let us wait; all the Days of our appointed Time*; a Day that is fully

fully to accomplish all the Hopes and Desires of Man, and all the Promises of God. If we hope for *the Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give in that Day to all that love his Appearing*, let us seek it with all our Hearts, and desire it with all our Souls. Let us *keep Innocency, and take heed to the Thing that is right*, be Christians indeed, in Faith and in Life, *be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord*, in Temperance, in Righteousness, and Godliness, *forasmuch as our Labour will not be in vain in the Lord.*

May God, in *whose Hand are the Hearts of Men*, persuade us to turn to him with all our Hearts, to *break off our Sins by Repentance*, and to *hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering*, in full Assurance and Persuasion of that eternal Life, which he, *who cannot lie*, hath promised through his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

MEMORANDUM

July 10, 1900. To the Honorable Secretary of the Interior, Washington, D.C. From the Honorable Commissioner of the General Land Office, Washington, D.C. Subject: The proposed sale of the public lands in the State of California. The proposed sale of the public lands in the State of California is a matter of great importance to the State and to the Nation. It is a matter which has been discussed for many years, and it is now being brought before the public for their consideration. The proposed sale of the public lands in the State of California is a matter of great importance to the State and to the Nation. It is a matter which has been discussed for many years, and it is now being brought before the public for their consideration.

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Very respectfully,
The Commissioner of the General Land Office.

S E R M O N XI.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 20.

For our Conversation is in Heaven.

THE best Hopes, as well as the best Interests of a Christian, relate to another World. The Concerns of our present Being, however valued and courted, however comprehensive and compleat in their Nature and Degree, yet compared with these blessed Hopes, and fairly weighed in the Balance of cool Reason, can challenge no Admiration, but will be viewed, as Trifles, with an Eye of Indifference, if not Contempt. When we consider the Disadvantages of the present Scene, that Plenty is not always Enjoyment, that Affluence is no Privilege against Diseases, but often the Parent of them, that the best Enjoyments of our present Existence answer not up to the
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the Capacity of our Nature, leave Wants still unsupplied, or soon returning; and if perpetuated to the Length of our present Duration, yet so uncertain and transient is our Abode here,----that if there be an Hope beyond the Grave, if other Pleasures abide us, other Happiness both more satisfactory and more durable, if this Happiness can be found in Heaven alone, and is there assuredly to be found of all that earnestly seek after it, then certainly it is both the Wisdom, and Duty of every Christian to set his Affections on this, and to make it his great Hope and Expectation.

I shall not detain you to observe, that the Word here translated *Conversation* denotes the peculiar Privileges of the sincere Followers of Jesus Christ; those valuable Interests, and blessed Rights belonging to the Citizens of Heaven, of which all that persevere in Faith and Virtue shall certainly be admitted to a full Possession. This is the *End* of a Christian's good Conversation. But
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my Design is to consider the Words of the Apostle, as the *Means* likewise of obtaining this invaluable End; namely to shew,

That it is the Duty of a true Christian, to have his *Conversation in Heaven*.---- God mercifully open your Hearts, and convince you of this Duty, that you may both know, and sincerely practise it, and become *wise unto Salvation*.

Now to have *our Conversation in Heaven*, it is previously necessary to possess our Minds with a solid Persuasion of that endless Bliss, which all that believe in Jesus, and obey the Gospel, shall at last certainly partake of. If you contemplate the true Motives to a Christian Behaviour, and compare them with the Life and Manners of those, who have forgotten God, and abandoned the Hopes of Futurity, you will soon perceive on what Foundation these different Measures of Behaviour stand. The sincerely good Man has rooted this Persuasion in his Heart, that
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he is both a sinful and an accountable Creature, standing on the Brink of Death and Judgment;---that God has mercifully given him the Offers of Repentance and Acceptance in his blessed Son, but has ^{vithal} assigned him a *Work*, which it imports him at the Peril of his Soul to *finish, before the Night comes*, before Nature's common Work is done, and he, that in *Adam* was born to die, hath paid this Debt of Sin. Can you wonder, if a Man so perswaded considers Life as a serious Business, that the Thing to be done in it is to make his whole Temper and Deportment Christian and divine, that he may live, while he does live, superior to the World, and it's Temptations, and, when God calls him hence, to have no Part of his Work unfinished, no sudden Repentance to be huddled over, and patched up in Haste, nothing, in short, but to take his Leave of present Things, to depart hence, and so *enter into the Joy of his Master*. The getting or keeping of Wealth, Diversions, Dress, and Splendor, those Idols of other Men so
much

much respected and adored, he considers as but little Things, that deserve not his best Thoughts, and are unworthy to be made the chief Business of his Life. What he seeks principally is *the Kingdom of God*, to be in constant Readiness and Preparation to meet his Judge, whose Coming is foretold to be *in a Day when we look not for him, and at an Hour when we are not aware.*

And now turn your Thoughts, if you please, on the Men of this World, and observe by what Card they steer through the Voyage of Life, not with Eyes lifted up to Heaven, but looking downwards only at *the Things which are seen.* “Man”, as the noble † Missionary of voluptuous Indulgence teaches, “Man is merely,” if you will believe him, a superior Animal, whose Views are confined to this present Life, and who has no reasonable Prospect of existing in any other State. God has given him Appetites and Passions; and Pleasure is their

† Lord Bolingbroke, Vol. V. p. 377, 378.

only Object. He has Reason indeed, but this Reason is only to enable him to contrive and provide what is most conducive to his Happiness; that is, what will yield him here "a continued, permanent Series of the most agreeable Sensations," which is the noble Writer's Definition of Happiness. Can you wonder, if a Creed, that makes Man perish like the Beasts, should make him live like them too? Many, it is true, who subscribe not to this Faith, do yet follow it in their Practice, and live, as if the Objects of Sense are those only, in which there is any Truth, and Solidity. By these are their Passions warmed, and governed; on these do their Desires and Aversions, their Hopes and Fears depend. And by whatever Refinements of Reason, or philosophical Speculation some Persons may be distinguished from others; yet in Matters of Practice will you ever find amongst them very little, or no Difference, where Religion has made none. But in this regard the same Character marks the wise and the unwise, the Man

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of Learning, and the Man lost in uneducated Grossness, that the same Tyranny of Appetite and Passion prevails in all, the same Stream of earthly Pursuits bears them unresisting along. Mark the various Employments of those, whom a Sense of Religion has not touched; what is it that fills their Hearts, and gives Life to their Labours? Is it not to obtain the Interests and Enjoyments that meet and solicit their Senses, to figure it in the Honours and Distinctions of Life, and to riot in it's Pleasures; however differing in their several Objects of Gratification, still agreeing not to look beyond the present Scene, nor to start a Wish that shall outrun the Limits of the World before them. They *walk*, as the Apostle describes them, (Eph. ii. 2, 3,) *according to the Course of this World, according to the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Spirit that worketh in the Children of Disobedience, having their Conversation, not in Heaven, but in the Lusts of the Flesh, fulfilling the Desires of the Flesh, and of the Mind, and are by Nature,* both in their Tempers,

and in the Issues of their Behaviour, the undoubted *Children of Wrath*. Talk to them of the Happiness in Heaven, *which God hath prepared for those that love him*;--- tell them of the Punishments that will certainly be inflicted on those that burst the Bonds of Conscience;---shew them, on one Hand, that *exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory* treasured up in the Stores of Heaven, the *Crown that fadeth not away*, the Streams of *Pleasure*, which flow in *God's Presence for evermore*;--- urge them, on the other, with those future Miseries of incurable Guilt, which Words cannot paint, and no Force of Imagination conceive, *where the Worm dies not, and the Fire is not quenched*, the Wailings of never-ending Woe, and the Agonies of inconsoleable Despair;---what Influence have Remonstrances and Reasons like these? These are Matters that fall not under the Observation of Sense, Things *which Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard of, neither have entered into the Heart of Man*. Their Attention grovels on this Earth, and

is chained down to *the Things that are seen*. One Thing only they desire, and that will they seek after, not indeed with the Psalmist to dwell in the House of the Lord, or to enquire in his Temple, to seek the good and perfect Way, and to walk in it with a perfect Heart, but, were it possible, to be immortal upon Earth, and to wallow for ever in it's Impurities. Gross and sensual Minds, that have lost their Capacity of tasting the purer and sublimer Joys of Virtue, the Pleasure of being good, and doing good, and have abandoned all Thoughts of the Kingdom of Heaven!

Now these are the Persons whom Religion cannot hold, Men devoted to Sense, and resolved to make the most of the present Scene, to serve the Interests of this Life, and enjoy *the Pleasures of Sin*; and as to hereafter---- let come what may. A Christian cannot act upon such Principles: And every one that does, by whatever Name he is called, yet any Name or Title will better suit

suit him, than that of a Christian. A Christian *looks not at the Things which are seen*; his *Treasure* is in Heaven, and his *Heart* is there also, His highest Interests, his dearest Hopes are placed, *where Christ sitteth at the Right-hand of God.* He *walks by Faith, and not by Sight.* His Life is as different as his Belief from that of other Men. He regards himself as a Probationer of Heaven, and a Candidate for immortal Joys; as much persuaded in his Heart of the Certainty of future Blessedness to all that *fear God and walk in his Ways*, as he is convinced by his Senses of the Realities of the present Life. He believes himself *a Stranger* only, and Passenger upon Earth, that is travelling towards *a better Country, that is an heavenly*: A Country so unlike to the present, that the Riches of this are no Riches there, it's Honours no Honours, it's Pleasures no Pleasures. He cannot therefore suffer the false Glitter of earthly Greatness to dazzle his Understanding, nor the Things and Pleasures of Sense to enslave him; but will readily

dily exchange the Tinsel of worldly Glory for the solid Honour that springs from God's Approbation, and can contentedly give up brutal Indulgences, that he may obtain the Joys of Angels.

Such is the Efficacy of Faith in a Christian, which is no half Persuasion, no hovering Opinion, no uninfluencing Notion idly floating in the Brain, but ever a sure Principle of Action, as steady in it's Government of the Heart and it's Wishes, as the Eye in it's sound State *is a Lamp to your Feet and a Light to your Paths*. It paints the World and the Things of it, not in the vain Glare which a deluded Fancy bestows, nor in the gaudy Colours in which they appear, when shewn through the false Glass of Passion, but in the sober Dress of Nature, as Things desirable indeed, but desirable merely as temporary Reliefs to our System of Flesh, that are short and perishable, and ending, when abused, in Pains and Distempers, and the Anguish of *a wounded Spirit*.

And

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And it shews, on the other Hand, what is *the Hope of our Calling*, and *what are the Riches of God's glorious Inheritance*; (Eph. i. 18.) that present Pleasure is but the Happiness of a Moment, as Happiness, real Happiness, which is the Hope of Christians, is Pleasure perpetuated, a Stream that runs with an unbroken Current, and ever will run. With these Sentiments ingrafted, and alive upon the Heart, a Man cannot be persuaded to part with his future Hope for the Blandishments of Time. If Pain must be endured, the shortest is to be chosen: If Pleasures must be resigned, the least durable are the least valuable. And can you then a Moment hesitate which to chuse, the Pains of Guilt, that end not, or the Pains of Virtue, *short and light Afflictions* enduring but for a Moment. There is no Proportion, and to a Man that thinks there is likewise no Choice between the short and the everlasting; between that which can please, but not satisfy; Pleasures that are turbulent and soon over, but conclude in endless Re-

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gret and immortal Misery, and Pleasures such as those of Heaven, in which there are no Intervals of Pain, no Breaches in our Felicity, that is one entire Flow and Tenor of Delight, and is commensurate both to the Desires and Duration of Man. Go to him that fancies *Man's Life consists in the Abundance that he possesseth*: Ask what he has found by Experience. He will tell you, if he answers truly, what the wise Man has told you already: *He that loveth Silver shall not be satisfied with Silver.* (Eccles. v. 10.)

And the same is likewise true of all other unnatural Pursuits, and Choices. They are only a leaden Iteration of the same Objects, "the same Things," as † One says, "over again or worse, a Repetition of the same Pleasures, but still with less Pleasure, and Relish." And yet was there a real satisfying Pleasure in these Things, the Scene before us is so much in Motion, and ever so ready to change; Health may so quickly

† Tillotson, Vol. III. p. 220.

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sicken, and Affluence so easily make itself Wings ;---- and if the Scene before us were not so perpetually shifting, the Actors themselves have so short a Part allotted them upon this Stage, we have so precarious a Tenure of Life, *we must so soon pass from these Things if these Things pass not from us*, that it will ever be the Wisdom, as well as Duty of Man, not to place his Heart where he has so slippery an Hold, but to *set his Affections on Things above*, and to have *his Conversation in Heaven*.

To have our *Conversation in Heaven* is to live under the full Impression of Christianity, that Religion which was mercifully designed to heal the Corruption of our Nature, and to make us happy by making us holy. And will not you diligently second the Grace of God ? Study the sacred Book, be convinced of your moral Weakness, and how ready God is to *give the holy Spirit to them that ask him*. If you want Help therefore, turn to *him who giveth to all Men liberally, and*
upbraids

upbraideth not : And let our Prayer be, as we are taught, for *daily Bread* ; that the Kingdom of God may come, and his *Will be done* in our Souls. These are the true and invaluable Blessings, which *every one that asketh receiveth*, if to his Earnestness in asking he adds a sincere Industry in obtaining. May this, which is the true Interest, be likewise the fervent Care of every one of us ! Grant us, gracious God, that we may love the Thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise ; that so among the sundry, and manifold Changes of the World, our Hearts may surely there be fixed, where true Joys are to be found, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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S E R M O N XII.

EPHESIANS iv. 31, 32.

Let all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking be put away from you, with all Malice.

And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's Sake hath forgiven you.

THE Apostle, in order to sweeten the Tempers of Men, and to qualify them for the Pleasures of social Life, lays down in the Words recited two Rules for their Observation. The first restrains those Passions, which are the Enemies of Peace, and would defeat the End of all Society : And the other points out those humane, benevolent Dispositions, which are necessary to smoothe the Path of Life, and make Men
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reciprocally useful, and agreeable to each other.

By *Bitterness* the Apostle seems to mean a natural Malignity, which there is in some Tempers, as in others there is a natural Sweetness of Disposition. Whatever be the Spring of this illiberal Spirit, whether it be the Peccancy of a bilious Humour, that makes Men ill-natured and morose, or whether it springs from Pride, which makes Men splenetic and revengeful, or be owing to a certain Soreness of Temper which stands in every Body's Way, and is therefore subject to be often hurt; ---- whatever be the Cause of it, we may too frequently observe the Workings of this unbenevolent Humour, as in it's lighter Degrees of Malignity it turns to Sourness, Opposition, and Perverseness, or when it is of a blacker and more depraved Cast, as it degenerates into Envy and Malice. Men of this Rancour and Bitterness of Heart almost rejoice in the Calamities of others, and make it their unhappy Pleasure

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Pleasure to aggravate and sharpen them. It is this wretched Frame of Temper, that *St. Paul* exhorts us to reform, which though not criminal in it's first Stage, being rather a Misfortune than a Fault, it is the Duty, however, and must be the Labour of our Lives to quell and subdue.

Perhaps you may wonder how it comes, that Men are formed with Constitutions so averse to their Duty. We see indeed, that some moral Infirmary cleaves inseparably to every Man, and in one Respect or other we are perpetually in Danger of behaving wrongly. And though a gracious God will mercifully allow for these involuntary Weaknesses, Men must on their Parts not act unfaithfully, must strive against this natural Corruption, pray that God would *work* in them *both to will and to do* better, and themselves also *work* in the Reformation of their vicious Tempers *with Fear and Trembling*.

Ill-Nature, and a malignant Spirit is indeed a sad Disposition of Soul, and utterly at Variance with the benevolent Spirit of Christianity, the great Aim of which is to plant and preserve Love and Peace in the World; as it's favourite Precept is ---- *Good-Will towards Men*. And tho' no Inclination, so far as it is purely natural, can be culpable; yet an Inclination, which in it's first Years, and during the Minority of Reason, was strictly natural, by not being severely dealt with as we grow up to Reason, but rather indulged than mortified, becomes our Choice. It's first Existence was the Effect of Nature; but that it is equally strong now, as it was originally, the Fault rests entirely upon ourselves.

This wretched Malevolence of Temper the Apostle therefore in the first Place exhorts us to banish from our Hearts, to cut up this *Root of Bitterness*, which produces Nothing but *Confusion and every evil Work*.

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If instead of following *St. Paul's* Admonition you indulge the Spleen of your Tempers, and stand so combustible and ready to flame out, what a small Spark will be sufficient to kindle up the Fire of *Wrath and Anger*? But from that *Wrath* which *worketh not the Righteousness of God* must we carefully abstain; that Rage and Ebullition of the Spirits, which boils up the Passions into Folly and Phrenzy, must the Follower of Jesus sincerely and earnestly guard against. We may indeed *be angry* without *Sin*; ---- if this Passion rises from a just Cause, if it only warms, and does not fire our Spirits, if in it's Degree and Continuance it be confined within the Bounds of Moderation, when we still preserve our Reason, and *the Sun goes not down upon our Wrath*. And how indeed can we venture to go to Rest without first imploring the Forgiveness of our Sins, and that God would protect and keep us in the defenceless Hours of Sleep? Or how can we pray to be forgiven, if we refuse to

forgive, if Wrath still burns in our Breasts?

--- Put this evil Spirit away from you. Guard against the Tyranny of this blind distracted Passion, that tramples on all the Laws of Religion and Reason, and that often on very slight Occasions. For, like those Tempests in the natural World, that spring from inconsiderable Exhalations, a Word, or Gesture, a Smile, or Look that displeases, will often raise this fermenting Spirit, and let it loose in the most violent Explosions.

To the Prohibition of *Wrath and Anger* the Apostle subjoins that also of *Clamour and Evil-speaking*, the farther Shoots from this *Root of Bitterness*. There is something so unmanly in this Rage of Words, as is sufficient to deter from the Guilt of it every Man that consults the Dignity of his Reason; something so unchristian in these Revilings, and in this Intemperance of Language, that whoever has any Religion in his Heart will *set a Watch over the Door of his Lips*, and *always take Heed, that he offends not with his Tongue*

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Tongue. For in the Midst of this Clamour the Voice of Reason is never heard. In this Tumult and Confusion *the God of Peace* will never dwell. *God is not in the great and strong Wind that rends the Mountains, not in the Earthquake, nor in the Fire, not in the Tempests of Passion, nor in the Flames of Resentment;---* but *in the small still Voice.* And if we value his Favour, we must seek it in the Calm and Tranquillity of Passion, *putting away all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking.*

But as the last and the worst Offspring of this *Root of Bitterness*, and to comprehend every evil Passion that rises from it, the Apostle adds the farther Prohibition of *all Malice.* This last indeed is a diabolic Sin, that thinks of nothing, that plots nothing, and delights in nothing, but Mischief. It is an evil Disease : It is a Fury in the Breast; a Fire that burns the Mind ; a restless Passion that scruples no Means of ruining the Object of it's Aversion. Some Men there

are, that have a deeper, and a cooler Malice. "Some Minds, like some Nights," as an elegant Writer observes, "are calm and close, and yet very black and dark, in which there reigns a fullen Stillness." This sedate Malice, that hides it's evil Talent in the Soul, watching an Occasion to exert itself in a bloodier Vengeance, contains a deeper Guilt, as it mixes Diffimulation with Fury, and wants all those alleviating Circumstances, that may be given in Excuse for violently enflamed Passions.

To the Forbearance of these savage Vices
St. Paul exhorts us

2. To add the Practice of the contrary Virtues,---*and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's Sake hath forgiven you.*

To be kind one to another is to cherish a candid, benevolent Disposition of Heart, inclining us to love every Man, to consider every

every Thing that comes from others in the best Light, to condescend, so far as innocently may be, to Men's Humours, and Habits of thinking, and with Pleasure to embrace every Opportunity of testifying the cordial Good-Will of our Minds.

And *Tender-heartedness* will constrain us to sympathise in the Sorrows of human Nature, to allow for all it's Weaknesses, and to live above the Influence of any selfish Passion that leads us to do, or to wish Evil to any one. For this Humanity and Tendernefs of Heart is no affected Kindness, consisting in Words of Compliment, that have no Correspondence with the Heart, an Hypocrisy of smooth Language only, but what flows from a genuine, sincere Cordiality, *that is felt*, as the † Original strongly expresses it, *in our very Bowels*.

This undissembled Tendernefs of Heart will enable us easily to pardon the Injuries

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† εὐσπλαγχνοι

we receive from others, and to reconcile ourselves to them, *forgiving one another as God for Christ's Sake hath forgiven us.* And however hard a Saying this may be generally thought, the Practice is most evidently necessary ;---- so necessary, that without it, no Man shall ever *enter into Life*. It is really desirable also for our own Sakes. For commanded as *we* are to forgive others, are not *others* likewise enjoined to forgive *us*, to study our Welfare and Quiet, to promote the Comfort of our Life, to be our Friends in every Instance, defending and asserting what is our Right as constantly, and as cordially, as they do their own ?

Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's Sake hath forgiven you. This Example are we to copy after, of God's infinite undeserved Love, *who spared not his own Son*, but for guilty, lost Creatures delivered the Innocent to Death, and exposed *the most Holy* (Dan. ix. 24.) *to the Curse of the Law*, (Rom. iii. 24.) *that*

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we might have Redemption through his Blood, even the Forgiveness of Sins. (Eph. i. 7.) Of this divine Goodness towards us have we Reason to say continually, as the Jews did of their Preservation amidst the Rage of the Babylonians;---- it is of the Lord's Mercies, that we are not consumed, because his Compassions fail not. (Jer. iii. 22.)

That which is required of us to each other is the very Thing of which God himself hath set us an Example. Had he not done it, were he not *kind to the Unthankful and to the Evil*, alas! we had all been long ago overwhelmed with Destruction. For is not every Man a sinful Creature? Came we not into the World with a fatal Inclination to Evil? Have we not indulged instead of controuling this unhappy Bias? Have we not from our Infancy discovered the Corruption of our Hearts by Actions, that must be displeasing to an infinitely holy God? Have we not grown in Guilt as we have grown in Years? And are not our Sins without

without Number, and without Excuse? And yet God is still good to us. Hath he not sent his only begotten Son into the World, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal Life? This wonderfully gracious, this most affecting Example of Forbearance, and Forgiveness, we are commanded to imitate. *Be merciful*, says the blessed Jesus, *as your Father is merciful*; and *St. Paul* exhorts to *forgive one another, even as God for Christ's Sake hath forgiven you*: And our very Prayers inculcate the same Lesson, ---- *forgive us our Trespases as we forgive them that trespass against us*.

Who then can withstand these Reasons, that *names the Name of Jesus*, and calls him his Lord and Master? Let the Christian, whose Sins against God are so many in Number, and of such various Kinds, that hopes nevertheless to find Mercy through Christ, who yet shews himself inexorable and implacable to his Brother; let him call to Mind the Punishment of that wicked Creature

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that cruelly vexed and persecuted his Fellow-Servant for a Debt of an hundred Pence, after his Lord had forgiven him the vast Debt of ten thousand Talents. Doubt not that *all* such shall be delivered up to the Tormentors, and shall feel the Truth of what St. James assures us, that *he shall have Judgment without Mercy who hath shewed no Mercy.*---*Be not deceived ;---With what Measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.* If you will bear with nothing, God will bear with nothing. If you forgive not, you shall not be forgiven. Though you are possessed of *all* the other Graces and Virtues of a Christian Life, though you practise every other Duty, always remember God's Day to keep it holy, *give all your Goods to feed the Poor*, spend your Days in Devotion, and *pray to God without ceasing* ;--nay though Men and Angels and all the Saints of Heaven should besiege the Throne of Mercy with joint Prayers for your Acceptance ; yet, *if you forgive not Men their Trespases*,----neither your Graces, nor your Virtues, nor your good Works, nor

your Charities, not your Prayers, nor your Tears, nor the Prayers of Men and Angels will be able to obtain God's Pardon. For it is impossible the Word of Christ should fail. *If you forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your Trespases.* May God enable us to lay this seriously to Heart. Love your Brethren, as you desire that God would love you. Bear with their Offences, as you hope that God will bear with your's. Forgive them as you expect Forgiveness at God's Hand. Then shall you be assured, that God will accept your Persons, and hearken to your Prayers, that he will bless you in Life, receive you in Death, and glorify you forever in Heaven for the Merits and through the Mediation of his dear Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

S E R M O N XIII.

MATTHEW vii. 1.

Judge not, that you be not judged.

A Solemn Prohibition from the Friend and Saviour of Man, enforced by the awfulest Consideration, that all hasty Censures and rash Judgments will recoil with infinite Violence upon ourselves! *For with what Judgment you judge, you shall be judged, and with what Measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.* Men may, if they please, enact a Law against themselves, and by a rigorous and uncharitable Judging of others make God, not an unjust, though a rigorous and severe Judge of them. And *if God be severe to mark what we do amiss, who can stand before him?*

Yet, if to see and feel the present Mischief, which this Sin produces, were sufficient

to reclaim us from it, the Prohibition of the Text had certainly been superfluous. For Hastiness and Precipitancy of judging is a Vice too injurious to be excused, and yet, for I know not what Reason, almost as generally practised as it is condemned. Whether it proceeds from Malice of Heart, and a sullen Satisfaction in doing Mischief; or whether it arises from Pride and an Impatience of superior Merit, or from Envy and Baseness of Temper, or, what perhaps is most commonly the Case, whether those, who know much Ill of themselves, are apt to judge ill of every one else,---whatever the Reason may be, yet the injurious Censures every Day passed upon Men's Actions and Characters, where we have no decisive Evidence, and the Case in many important Circumstances is inaccessible to our Knowledge, will justify an Endeavour to expose the Injustice and Wickedness of such a Behaviour.

The Text indeed does not forbid every kind of judging others. In Cases that are open

open to our Knowledge, and wherein it is our Duty to judge, we are under no Restraint. But in every Instance Men need a Bridle rather than a Spur, and are by far more prone to transgress all Bounds than to fall short. Suffer me therefore to check this meddling Humour, this fatal Lust of Censure; to shew how dangerous it is to judge without Evidence, to decide where there is no knowing the Case. Whenever Men pronounce upon Actions without knowing the Motives and Circumstances of them, whether they be the Effects of Ignorance or of Knowledge, of Rashness and Surprise, or of mature and deliberate Counsel,---all this is evidently wrong, and therefore included in that tremendous Warning;---*judge not, lest thou also suffer the just Judgment of God.*

And this, one might reasonably hope, should be decisive to Christians. But still Men will judge though at the Peril of their Souls. They set up a Tribunal, before which every Character is summoned to answer, not only for what was never done, but
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what perhaps was never thought; a Tribunal without Authority, where Judges preside without Qualifications, and pass Sentence without Prudence, without Justice, and without Charity,

What is this Tribunal but arbitrary Humour? Who gave them this Authority to judge? *Is it from Heaven or of Men?* Not from Heaven. Nothing can be plainer in Scripture than the express Condemnation of this uncharitable Censure. *What hast thou to do to judge another's Servant,---St. Paul asks, and declares, that to his Master, to God alone, he stands or falls.* And how little Men will allow to this censorious Humour every Man may judge, when it comes to his own Turn to suffer. It is therefore a mere Encroachment upon Society, and a most intolerable one, that often misinterprets innocent Actions, blames Men for what does not deserve Blame, nay often condemns them for what deserves Praise, perverting what is good, and aggravating that which is evil.

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But allowing such Men a Right to judge, are they properly qualified to exercise it, have they the necessary Degrees of Capacity and Virtue?

Shall a Man judge without proper Knowledge of the Case? Can a Man *render* to every one his *Due*, who knows not what every one has a just Claim to? Or how will he maintain the Law, who does not so much ~~as~~ understand it?

The Judge therefore, that wants Knowledge, wants the most essential Part of his Character. Yet of uncharitable Censurers who is it that comes duly qualified with this necessary Circumstance? Very often the Fact in question is not sufficiently understood. Yet without taking Pains to get Information, or waiting, as they ought, till Time has rectified their Mistakes, they hurry on to pass Sentence, as if conducted by a supernatural Light, or guided by a Spirit of Infallibility.

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But supposing them sufficiently *knowing*, they may not yet be sufficiently *upright*, and disengaged enough to pronounce *impartially*. To be Judge and Party both is too much for human Frailty. And is not this generally the Case? Are not those, who are so ready to censure others, themselves under undue Influence; governed perhaps by a Wantonness of Malice that delights in blackening, or a detracting Humour that loves to disparage Merit, or Passion that magnifies Infirmities into Crimes, or Pride whose Trade, by which it thrives and is maintained, is depreciating the Worth of others, in order to bring down their Characters to a Level with their own? Every proud Man has a secret Interest to serve by undervaluing the good Sense or good Meaning of others. He is destroying a Rival in the good Opinion and Applause of the World, which he is desirous of engrossing to himself. Such Censurers are then both Judges and Parties, unfit to decide, when armed with Authority, and yet
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presuming to decide in Cases, where not the Shadow of Authority can be pretended.

Such Men have no Right to judge at all. And yet how iniquitously are their Judgments given? Do they first enquire, and obtain a just Evidence of Facts? But, on the contrary, is not any kind of Evidence thought sufficient, any sort of Authority good and substantial? That Scrupulosity and Caution, wherewith Men ought to receive any Ill of others, is employed only in the hearing any Good of them. But to an evil Report scarce any Objection is made. There needs no more than the bare Affirmation of one, that is, perhaps, no Slave to his Word, or very probably misinformed: There needs no more than a dark Rumour without any certain Source or Author: Nay, the lightest Presumption, and the lewdest Conjecture is sufficient to authenticate the Tale, and to found a Judgment thereupon in as sanguine a Way, as if the Fact were notorious to all the World.

It is a Rule in judging, that deserves a religious Observation, never to condemn without a Trial. No Crimes are sufficient to debar a Man's Claim to be heard in his own Defence; a Privilege, which in the general Belief of Men cannot justly be refused to the worst Malefactors.

But is this Rule observed in the Judgments that Men daily pass upon each other? Far from admitting the Sufferer to a fair Trial they carefully conceal the Reasons of his Condemnation. This Arrow is always shot in the dark. The Light would but shew the Guilt and Barbarity of wounding and mangling without Offence, and without Provocation. The Man's Reputation is condemned and executed without one Question asked, without the least Enquiry made after what he has to offer in his Justification.

It was not without Reason therefore, that the Word of Truth has so severely threatened these Despisers of Truth, and that the di-

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vine Judgment is denounced against all those that trample on the Rules of human Justice; who judge without Authority, and without Qualifications to judge, without either Knowledge or Impartiality, and neglect the Methods which every fair Judge religiously observes; who pass Sentence without Prudence, without Justice, and without Charity.

Charity, far from surmising Evil where there is none, *thinks no Evil* where there really is. But the Behaviour of these Judges is Charity inverted, who err through an *ill-natured* Credulity, and undistinguishing Suspicion; who *rejoice not in the Truth, but rejoice in Iniquity*; who always, when Things are doubtful, encline to the severe Side, and, in the worst Sense of the Expression, *believe all Things*.

Justice consists in giving to every one his Due, and therefore does not act at Random, but waits for the Light of Proof, and never passes Sentence till it has arriv'd at clear, distinct, and decisive Evidence. But these

Judges are too rash for Thought, and too nimble for Enquiry. Justice moreover does that Right to others, which you would have others do to you. But these Men are as *cruel* to others as they are *tender* to themselves, *unforgiving* whilst they *want Forgiveness*, and eager to condemn, though they themselves are fuller of Faults than of Virtues.

And these rash Judgments are as utterly opposite to Wisdom and good Sense as they are contrary to Justice and Charity. To mistake is indeed too natural to Man; but to mistake wilfully, through Precipitancy, through want of Attention, through a want of Impartiality, this is Man's Reproach. If you are ignorant, wherefore should you judge? If you have not Leisure to enquire, why are you not prudent enough to forbear to intermeddle? At least, why do you not suspend your Judgment, till the necessary Evidence be obtained? If the proper Degree of Proof is unattainable, will you judge nevertheless? Can you judge in this Case
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without Rashness, without giving the World
just Reason to say, that you are either a Fool
or a Knave?

It is Prudence likewise in another View to
forbear uncharitable Judgments: For if
Men wish to appear in a good Light to
others, very imprudently do they take their
Measures, when they indulge this Wanton-
ness of Censure. Nothing is a stronger
Presumption of a bad Heart, than a Read-
iness to think ill of Men. *Thou thoughtest
wickedly that I was altogether such an one as
thyself*----is the Psalmist's Character of a ve-
ry immoral Man. None most certainly are
so ready to believe ill of others, as those
who are capable of doing ill themselves.
And what they charge upon them is too often
no more than what they have juster Reason to
blame themselves for. "A good Man hardly
suspecteth another to be evil; and an
evil Man scarcely supposeth any to be
good †." Some indeed are weak enough to

† St. Chrysostom

distinguish

distinguish themselves by a sort of universal Censure, always blaming, ever hunting after Scandal, always busy in spreading it, going about from House to House, and from Place to Place, to dispose of their Tale, as if Defamation were the Trade they lived by. Doubtless, *the Mouth speaks out of the Abundance of the Heart*. Such Judgments as evidently shew a Depravity within, as the Man proclaims his own Distemper, when he affirms all Things about him to be yellow. *Judge not therefore, that ye be not judged.* Judge not uncharitably, lest the Artillery of your ill-nature be turned upon yourself, and Men conclude *you* guilty from your Readiness to think *others* so, lest they believe you unwilling to have a *good* Opinion of any one, because you cannot but entertain a *bad* Opinion of yourself.

This indeed ought to have it's Influence upon us, that easily to judge ill of others affords a just Suspicion that all is not right at Home. But our Saviour has taught us to abstain from all uncharitable Censures for a more
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tremendous Reason, because *God* will judge *us*, as *we* judge *others*, and allow Nothing to those, who make no charitable Allowances to their Brethren. And I believe there is none of us but will confess, that we certainly stand in need of a very favourable Judgment from a merciful God, and unless the Surprises, the Inadvertencies, the Weaknesses of human Nature are compassionately thought of, and largely allowed for, that no Man, not even the justest, *shall be able to stand in the Judgment*. Instead therefore of playing the Judge without Evidence, and censuring where we have not proper Knowledge, let us take the surer, that is, the wiser Way, to play the Censor upon ourselves. There without our own Fault we cannot possibly be mistaken; whereas the strictest Enquiry into other Persons and Things is no Privilege from Error. In the Case of his Neighbour no Man's Mistake can warrant an unjust Surmise, and much less justify a false Censure. The Rule is strict and precise; *judge not, that you be not judged*. But with regard to ourselves it is just the contrary:

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contrary: *If we will judge ourselves, we shall not be judged of the Lord.*—*Let a Man then examine himself*; let him apply himself in earnest to this great and difficult Work by a strict Scrutiny into, and exact Survey of the whole State of his Soul; and then he will either be too much employed to be unjustly censorious of others, or he will see so much amiss in himself, as to keep him humble and favourable in his Opinion of them. This will teach us to follow the Apostle's Advice, who was well aware of Men's Pronics to this Perverseness of Censure, and would correct a base Humour by a very generous Rule: (Phil. 2. 3.) *Let each esteem others better than themselves.* If we will judge, let us be favourable, and charitable in our Judgment, thinking it better to err through a good-natured Credulity, than through an undistinguishing Suspicion, because a good-natured Credulity will expose us only to some temporal Inconveniences, but an undistinguishing Suspicion will beget in a Man a settled Uneasiness, a tormenting Jealousy, and the whole Train of black Passions, which will make his Soul as

dark

dark as that Hell, into which they will at last irrecoverably sink him. No Man, doubtless, shall ever be condemned of God for not judging his Brother. But our own unjust Censures of him have a Guilt in them; that will infinitely wound our Souls. Let then another's Want of Religion admonish us to Charity. And if our Charity prove mistaken, in this we may rest assured, that God will accept the Charity, and overlook the Mistake. But if in judging him, with whom we have nothing to do, we happen to judge one Way, and God and Truth to judge another, let us dread, as we have infinite Reason, and take Heed of that just Tribunal, which will not overlook, but severely punish our uncharitable Mistakes. *Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Keep your Tongue from Evil, and your Lips from speaking Falshood; (Pſ. 34. 13.) and your Reward shall be great. For by thy Words thou shalt be justified, and by thy Words thou shalt be condemned;* and the Scripture assures us, that

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if any Man offend not in Word, the same is a perfect Man. You see what is necessary to the Character of a Christian : You see what shall make a Man perfect in the Sight of God, the sincere Love of his Neighbour for God's Sake, a charitable Concern for his Good, a candid Interpretation of his Actions. May God give us the Grace to aspire at, and ever practise this Perfection for the sake of Jesus Christ our blessed Saviour and Redeemer..

S E R M O N XIV.

2. PETER, iii. 3, 4.

There shall come in the last Days Scoffers, walking after their own Lusts, and saying where is the Promise of his Coming ?

THE treating serious and important Matters with Lightness and Contempt is a perverse Humour of some Men, which has long disturbed the World : A Conduct which, however unreasonable, has not wanted Advocates to justify it. Accordingly *Ridicule* has been commended and practised as the proper Way to discover Truth ; nothing, it seems, deserving to be thought wise and just, that we can break a good Jest upon, and dextrously laugh out of Countenance. The Effect has been answerable to so foolish a Principle ; and many a worthy Character has been insulted, many

Things of the most interesting and serious Importance have been made sport with, and so effectually derided, as to be laughed into Contempt.---Religion itself, with the awful Prospect of it's future Hopes and Fears, was scoffed at, and jested upon in the Days of the Author of this Epistle, as it is now by some, Men of profligate Lives, and shameful Manners. It was represented in a ridiculous Light, as the Opinion of Men weakly credulous, that expect they know not what.--I shall not take any Pains to shew, how improperly this low sneering Humour is applied to try the Justness or Absurdity of Principles and Characters. It is no new Observation, that Wit and good Sense do not always go together, that the silliest People are generally aptest to laugh, and the most forward to *deride* are they, who are least capable, or least willing to *understand*, and that a great Deal of that Kind of Ability, which raises Mirth and Laughter, may be found in a Man, that hardly possesses common Sense. My Design on the Words of

the Apostle is to shew, how dangerous the Indulgence of this Humour is, which I shall attempt to do

1.--By offering to your Thoughts a few Instances of it's fatal Consequences. And these I shall urge

2.--As a just Ground of a Christian's serious Persuasion, that *God has appointed the Day in which he will judge the World by Jesus Christ.*

The Persons described by the Apostle in the Text are not those only who are declared Infidels, but dissolute and wicked Christians, those who *profess to believe in God, while in Works they deny him*; Men, that by the mere Love of Vice are led into Prophaneness, and a Contempt of all serious Religion. They *walk after their own Lusts*, and disbelieve a Day of Judgment; because the Prospect of such a Day can present nothing to their Thoughts but Misery and Destruction.

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Look into their Lives, and there will you see the Reason of their Quarrel with Christianity. *Lovers of Pleasure* they are, and Haters of all serious Thought, and virtuous Instruction, corrupt in their Principles, and debauched in their Lives, who despise the Obligations of Religion, and defy it's Terrors, and think it Wit to turn the most serious Matters into Ridicule; as if the Soul were to perish with the Body, and Religion but the Invention of cunning Men to dupe the weak and credulous; as if Hell were a Fable, and Heaven a Dream, our Life under no Providence, and our Death without Hope. The Psalmist by a beautiful Gradation gives you the Progress of their Wickedness. They first *walk in the Counsel of the Ungodly*, and frequent evil Company, then *stand in the Way of Sinners*, and begin to take Pleasure in their Conversation, and at last *sit down in the Seat of the Scornful*, and do the Office of Seducers for the Devil. They wish, they fancy, and at last will undertake to demonstrate, that a future State is a mere Dream, and what
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they want in Argument is ever supplied by great Plenty of Mockery and Scorn.

Thus do they reason, but surely not aright: For did not the old World reason exactly in the same Manner? Noah, that Messenger of God to a World that *lay in Wickedness*, met, no doubt, with the same Mockery and *Contradiction of Sinners*, when he foretold the *Flood of Waters*, which God would *bring upon the Earth to destroy all Flesh, wherein was the Breath of Life*. How general was the Infidelity of the World at that Period of Time, when *all Flesh had corrupted it's Way*? And as general, doubtless, was the Scorn and Ridicule of his seemingly absurd Labour in building an Ark. What! A Flood of Waters to cover the Tops of the highest Mountains! No doubt, but the Man was regarded as strangely whimsical to dread a Deluge, of which there was not in Nature the least Semblance of Probability. How soundly ridiculous did the *Preacher of Righteousness* seem, how very foolish was he, and how very wise did they

they believe themselves? But the Gaiety of their Mirth and Raillery was severely, though justly, confuted by the Event, in that stupendous Uproar of Heaven, Earth, and Waters, when *the Fountains of the great Deep were broken up, and the Windows of Heaven were opened.* An Event, which not only Scripture History, but other Writers of Antiquity, and the Appearances of all Nature, and the Tradition of all Nations testify with an Evidence as unanimous, as it is awakening and solemn.

At another important Period, when the holy God resolved to destroy the Inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, because the Cry of their Sin was gone up to Heaven, we find the same Humour of making Sport with the solemn Warnings of approaching Destruction operating in the same fatal Manner. If there be a God holy and just, and *of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*; what could be more naturally expected than a dreadful and supernatural Vengeance on the horridest

horriest of Crimes grown into general Fashion and Practice, when in that infamous and filthy City not *ten righteous Persons* could be found. But this infatuated People were, forsooth, Men of Wit and Pleasure. Talk to them of Religion, and they answer with a Jest. Accordingly when *Lot went out, and spake unto his Sons in Law*, and said, as he was directed by the Angels, *up, get ye out of this Place, for the Lord will destroy this City, he seemed as one that mocked unto his Sons in Law*. Neither the known Honesty of the Man, nor the Importance of his Message could persuade them to believe him in earnest, or to afford him a serious Attention. He warns them as a Prophet, and presses them, doubtless, with the Tendernefs and Emotion of a Father?---But in vain.---He *seems to them as if he mocked*, and they do more than seem to mock him in return? Why should To-morrow differ from other Days? Whoever saw it rain Fire? But on the other Hand, how dangerous is it to indulge a Humour of Levity and Jestings, and to mock when

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God

God threatens? *This was the Iniquity of Sodom.* (EZEK. 16. 49.) The Inhabitants went on secure, wholly taken up with their Pleasures and their Sins, and laughing at the very last Warning of instant Destruction :---*Till the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah Brimstone and Fire from the Lord out of Heaven, and he overthrew those Cities, and all the Plain, and all the Inhabitants of the Cities, and that which grew upon the Ground.*

To these Examples of God's Vengeance on obstinate Wickedness I might add the very remarkable Desolation of Jerusalem, and the Jewish Nation in accomplishment of our Saviour's Prophecies concerning them : Prophecies which, however unlikely to be fulfilled at the Time they were spoken, and how much soever the Subject of prophane Jestings and Drollery, received nevertheless the exactest Completion. Within forty Years after the Resurrection of Christ this Destruction befel them; for our Lord had fixed the Time, saying, that *the Days were*

at hand, and would come before that Generation should pass away, whilst the Daughters of Jerusalem, or their Children should be living. He foretold *Famines, Pestilences, Earthquakes, fearful Sights, and great Signs* from *Heaven*, the greatest Tribulation that was ever known, the comparative Happiness of the barren, when the Distress was so extreme, that a Mother killed, and eat her own Child. All this was punctually fulfilled. All these Circumstances are so exactly related in the Account of the Jewish War by Josephus, that (as Dr. Jortin remarks,) his History seems to be a Commentary on the Prophecies of Christ. And both Josephus and Tacitus among other Particulars give a detailed Account of the fearful Sights, and great Signs from Heaven, which preceded the Destruction of Jerusalem. Are not these Instances of the fatal Consequences of laughing over the Notices of a just Providence, that *neither slumbers nor sleeps*, and minutes down every Action, every Word, every Thought of your Hearts in a *Book of Remembrance*?

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membrance? Are not these Instances a just Ground to believe, that *God has appointed the Day, in which he will judge the World* by his Son Jesus Christ?

This is the proper Use we ought to make of the divine Visitations. The Judgments of God, which are executed upon particular Ages, and Persons, and Places, are designed as general Admonitions to the Inhabitants of the World of an over-ruling righteous Judge. Such were the Instances offered to your serious Reflection, intended to be standing Monuments of God's extreme Indignation against universal and daring Impiety. Yet as these Events were of an extraordinary Kind, of which there appeared no natural Cause, and concerning which no antecedent Warning could be obtained but by extraordinary Revelation, there was perhaps in these Cases more Pretence for Hesitation and Doubt, than with regard to the Persuasion of a future Judgment and a future State. This is an Expectation, which Reason

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Reason and Conscience dictate intelligibly to all that reflect. Do but turn it over calmly and seriously in your Thoughts. Consider the Reasonableness of this Expectation in the Manner you certainly will at your leaving the present Scene: For in those impartial Moments, when Passion and Prejudice are gone, in that dark and gloomy Time, when you are *walking through the Valley of the Shadow of Death*, Religion will undoubtedly appear no unferious Business, and you will be convinced that *the Judge of all the Earth* will certainly *do Right* in that Day, when every Man shall *receive the Things done in his Body*, and *every Work shall be brought into Judgment, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

We have read of God's Justice in drowning a World, that was grown corrupt: You have heard of his *raining down Fire and Brimstone upon Sodom out of Heaven*: You have seen what is written of the Desolation of Jerusalem, and the Dispersion of the Jews into
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all Nations. Was not all this very plainly foretold? Is not all this most punctually fulfilled? Do not the same Scriptures, in which these Events are recorded, do not they foretell likewise, that the *Day is appointed, when we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ?* And what do the past Examples of divine Justice teach? Surely the very Lesson for which St. Peter and St. Jude alledge them. If God *spared not the old World, and brought in the Flood upon the World of the ungodly, if he condemned the Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to an Overthrow, making them an Example to all future Scoffers,* we may from hence deduce this indisputable Conclusion, *the Lord knoweth how to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished.*

But do Men scoff at Things serious, and are any that call themselves Christians guilty of this Profaneness? Not many, let us hope---perhaps but a few---only a few abandoned Rakes and Debauchees, who openly make a Jest of Religion, and set the Ter-

rors

rors of Futurity at defiance. Yet surely to slight it in the Heart is almost as wicked, as to scoff at it with the Tongue; and Men may by their Actions express as strong a Disbelief and Contempt of a future State, as the *Scoffers* that *shall arise in the last Days* with all their Wit and Impudence shall be able to do. To live as if there were no God, no Resurrection, no Judgment-Day, what is this but saying in very plain Language, *where is the Promise of his coming*,----to treat our Saviour as just Lot was treated, only as a grave and solemn Trifler.

But believe it, Religion is no trifling Business. If you make light of the divine Warnings *to flee from the Wrath to come*, still God is just and true; and you cannot hope to escape the Fate, when you follow the Example of Lot's Sons in Law. We may regard what is told us about Religion and it's infinite Hopes and Terrors, as if all this were Jest and Mockery. But surely God is never in Jest, and the farthest in the World from

from mocking, or being mocked with Impunity. He speaks very seriously, and will as seriously execute what he so plainly threatens. Men may steel themselves against the Impressions of Religion, stupify the Sense of it, and lay Conscience asleep. But Things are still the same. Heaven is an *exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*, though we make light of it. And Hell is certainly all and more than we are told of it, all *Blackness of Darkeness*, devouring yet everlasting Flames. Men's Forgetfulness of these awful Truths cannot change the Nature of Things, nor *make God a Liar*. You may neglect his *great Salvation*, run riot in Pleasure, and take no Thought about hereafter. Just *so it was in the Days of Lot*---*They eat, they drank. Their God was their Belly, and their Shame their Glory*. Days of Merriment and Licence were these, in which scarce a serious Thought interposed. Particularly what an Evening was their last? Feasting and Mirth, light Wantonness and Laughter prolonged through all the Night, perhaps till the very Hour, in
which

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Lot went out of Sodom. But what Tongue can describe, or Heart conceive the Rest, the Surprise, the Confusion, the Horror, the Agonies that followed. Then Wrath came forth from God. The Storm fell, and it rained Fire and Brimstone from Heaven.----

The Æther poured it's burning Torrents, the Air was in Flames, the Earth convulsed and wrapt in Fire, and not a Glimpse of Hope, no Way to escape! Think, what a dreadful Scene! What Shrieks of Children for their Parents, and of Parents for their Children! What heart-rending Cries of blasted Sinners and despairing Reprobates amidst the inevitable Destruction! Even so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be with the same overwhelming Surprise to Men abandoned to the same sensual Indulgences, and Forgetfulness of their Creator. As by the Word of God in the Days of Noah the World that then was, being overflowed with Water, perished; so the Heavens and the Earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in Store, reserved unto Fire against the Day of Judgment,

and Perdition of ungodly Men. God is faithful, you see, and punctual to his Threatnings, as to his Promises. When Noah and Lot foretold Destruction to the Workers of Iniquity, you read how exactly these Menaces were fulfilled, and *Wrath came upon them to the uttermost.* And can we hope to escape, who are Witnesses of these Judgments, if we refuse to repent; who know all the *Terrors of the Lord*, and the everlasting Burnings prepared for the wicked and obstinate, if we reject the Warnings of God's Justice? These Things happened to them for *Examples*, and *they are written for our Admonition.* May we learn Wisdom by them, the Wisdom never to play with Death, and to make sport with Destruction, the Wisdom *in this our Day* to mind the Things that belong to our Peace. Take heed, Brethren, lest at any time your Hearts be overcharged with Surfeiting, and Drunkenness, and Cares of this Life, and so that Day come upon you unawares, for as a Snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the Face of the whole Earth.

May

May God give us the Grace seriously to deny *Ungodliness and worldly Lusts*, and to work out our Salvation with *Fear and Trembling*, that we may give *Account of the Things done in the Body with Joy*, and not with Grief, through the Merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

END of the FIRST VOLUME.

May God give us the Grace to follow to
any Judgment and worthy Labor, and to
rest and satisfaction with His own Blessing.
Thus, and we may say, is the end of the things
that are in the world, and the end of the things
that are in the world.



End of the First Volume.

